PC HOME

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Britain's No 1 family PC magazine

CD Edition

Smash the SPEED barrier

Hottest new games of the year previewed

Get Pentium power for under £400 – we show you how

SOUNDS FANTASTIC
Value-for-money Wavetable sound cards reviewed

THAT'S HOW TO DO IT
Software to make your kids more creative

IDG MEDIA
THE MARK OF QUALITY EDITORIAL

S: Windows 95 latest • Budget wordprocessors • Cheapest route to Internet • High Street survey

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STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION® "A Final Unity™"

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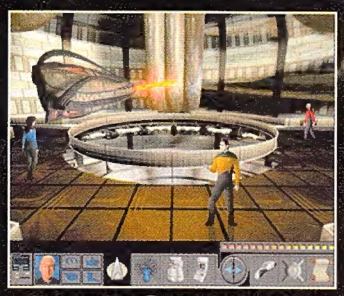
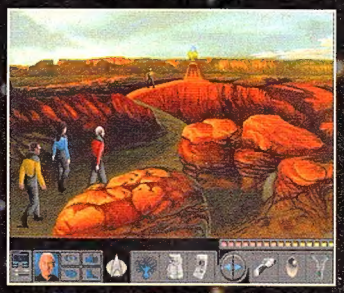
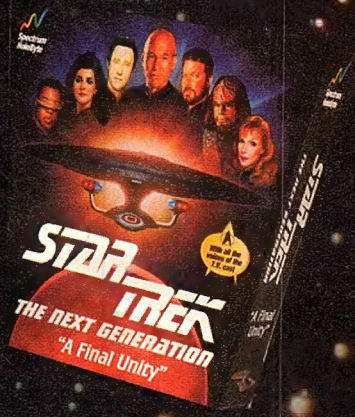
Tension boils on the bridge as another Red Alert appears imminent


Alert your Away Team and pick the right combination of talent for each critical mission

Open hailing frequencies and prepare for the unexpected


Beam down to exotic worlds as the mystery of an ancient and highly advanced civilisation slowly unfolds.



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Also look for STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION® "Future's Past™" on Super NES.

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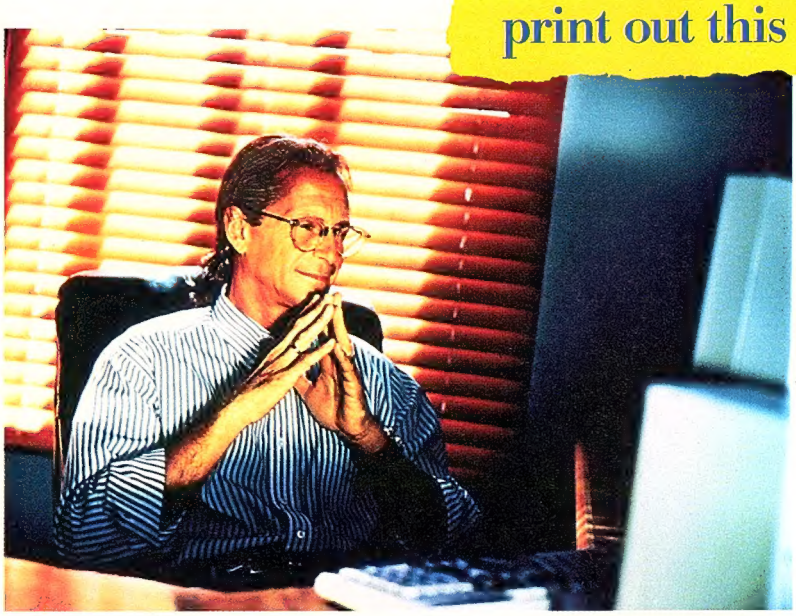

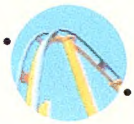

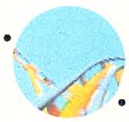

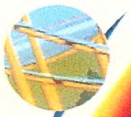

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IBM

There is a differen

Wipe your feet and come on in. Editor Duncan Evans invites you into this month's issue

THE adventure continues! As I promised in last month's issue we've been putting the finishing touches to your new look *PC Home*, designing it to make you feel more at home with your PC.

In this issue we've been looking at Windows 95 to see how the operating system of the '90s is coming along. You can read about that on page 122, but the good news is that it's certainly running faster than it was in earlier pre-release forms.

On the education front Wilf Rees casts an eye over classics turned multimedia – Huckleberry Finn and the Adventures of Tom Sawyer, and more. Our panel of family testers put Interplay's Kingdom through its paces. Is it really a cartoon adventure for the whole family? Find out on page 68.

Meanwhile, don't let your kids vegetate during the summer holidays, inspire them with a range of creative software packages – reviewed on page 71.

Over in the Studio we've had a look at value-for-money but power-packed sound cards – and a range of wordprocessors that won't break the bank – they're all under £100.

After Rumbelows were closed down it left a gap in the High Street electrical retail market, one which Escom have rushed in to fill with a range of over 100 computer stores. How do the new boys measure up? Is their service better than Dixons and Currys and do they know what they're talking about?

We sent our reporter Adrian Worrall, under cover to a branch of each chain store to find the truth.

Over in the Workshop, for our cover feature Mark Ulyatt takes his PC apart and rebuilds it to make it faster, bigger and stronger, all ready for the resource hungry Windows 95.

Throw in our usual mix of the latest news and reviews, a great E3 report from Los Angeles and a plentiful supply of hints and tips and you've a marvellous magazine.

And remember, it's your magazine as well, so if you have any opinions or points to make send your letters to:

Write Home, PC Home, IDG Media, Media House, Adlington Park, Macclesfield. SK10 4NP

We are delighted with the reader response so far – please keep the letters coming. You obviously like what you see, and with your help we can go from strength to strength. ■

what's the score?

WHILE we've been redesigning the magazine to make life more comfortable for you, our scoring boxes have changed too.

Non-games products have the usual details concerning supplier and price and also a summary of the worthiness of the product and a score out of 10.

profile

Product	Eyewitness Encyclopedia of Nature
Price	£59
Format	CD-Rom
Supplier	Dorling Kindersley
Tel	0171-836 5411

Summary

A superbly presented family reference work that doesn't dig too deep but covers a wealth of subjects

8

Your new-look *PC Home*

IF you didn't catch the July issue, here's a quick reprise of our revolutionary room concept:

the breakfast table

SIT down at the table and ease your way gently into another hectic day with the hottest news from the world of the home PC, the most interesting letters to arrive in ourbulging mailbag and reviews of the latest releases from the try-before-you-buy market and the best from the world of CD-Rom.

the living room

IT'S the family room where you can educate and entertain your children and even take up interesting projects with them. Your own hobbies are dealt with here and next month we'll have a well-known guest join us for a chat about his PC. Until then, see what our panel of family testers make of Kingdom, Interplay's medieval cartoon adventure.

the games room

THIS is the all-action section where you can discover whether the latest games make the grade, what's under development, where to go for the best in budget buys and, of course, for those unfinished challenges, complete solutions, hints and tips, and cheats.

the studio

GET creative! Whether it's painting, drawing, animation or making music, you'll find it all here in the Studio. But, that's not the only thing: The coolest sound cards, the latest net software and the fruitiest inkjets all come under the spotlight too.

the workshop

THERE comes a time when you are ready to upgrade your PC's memory, change its graphics card, increase storage space or install a new sound card.

One option is to put on your overalls and go under the bonnet. As well as hardware upgrade sessions, we have problem solving, hints and tips and programming.

inside HOME

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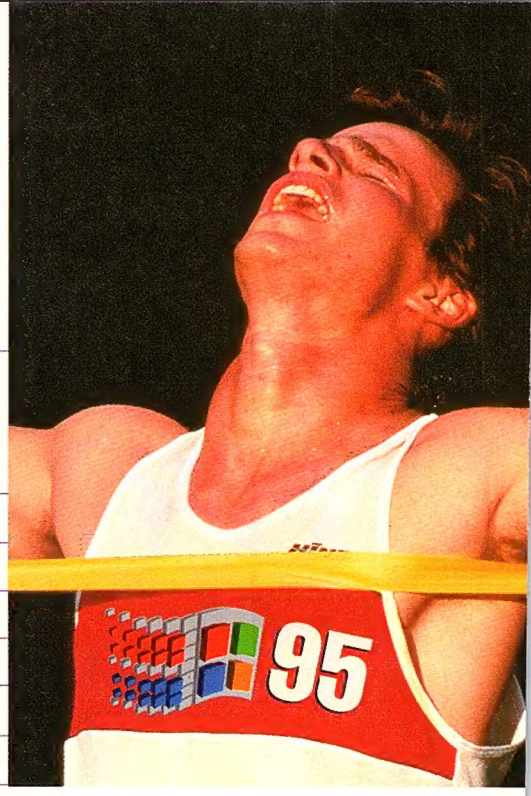
COVER FEATURE

Smash the speed barrier 152

With Windows 95 just around the corner, are you sure that your PC is going to be fast enough to run it? We show you how to upgrade everything from processor, hard drive, graphics card, sound card and more. We tell you what you'll need, how to install it step by step and what components to buy



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Our king of the shareware scene looks at everything that's new and exciting

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Encourage your children to get creative with a PC. Kerry Culbert leads the way

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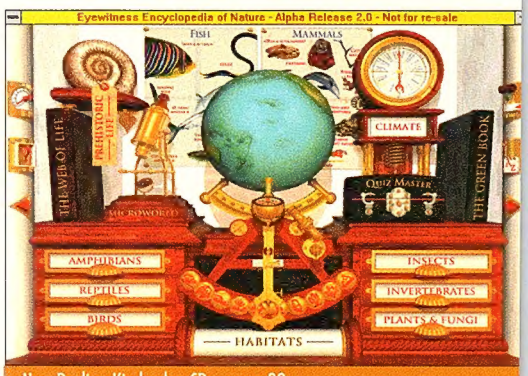
Our under-cover reporter puts some of the High Street retailers on the spot

Make your kids creative – page 71



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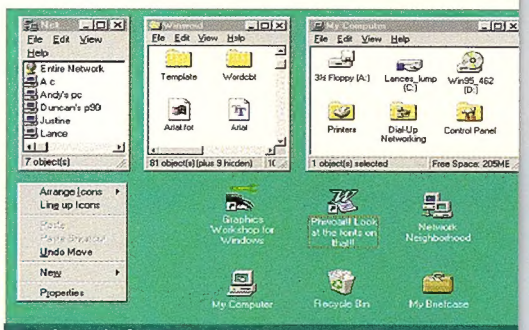

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GREAT SUBSCRIPTION OFFER – PAGE 124

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Another stunning CD-Rom double, with all the software your family needs and Time Almanac, a full commercial package. Find out more from the CD-Rom contents now.

HD CONTENTS 17

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Your final chance to win a Mesh Pentium and hundreds of other goodies in our £30,000 prize giveaway 58

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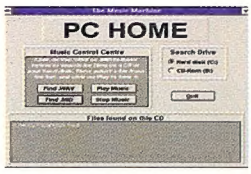
With a PC, a keyboard and the right software, you too could play the piano

Pull on the overalls and take the lid off your PC. Upgrade, add cards and memory, or explore the mysteries inside



Learn to program in Visual Basic – page 164

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Here's where the action is: Hot releases, games in progress, complete solutions and hints, tips and cheats – they're all here for your delight

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When you want to make a point, contact us

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IDG test centre

IDG have the facility to test all types of hardware from multimedia PCs to scanners and MPEG cards. Starting next issue, each month we will carry a top 20, value-for-money MPC chart. If you want your MPC to be included in these tests and charts please contact:
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EDITORIAL

WHEN you write to PC Home please use the following list to address your queries to the most appropriate department:

GENERAL LETTERS AND TECHNICAL PROBLEMS

Send your general letters on any subject under the sun to Duncan Evans, Editor, *PC Home*, IDG Media, Media House, Adlington Park, Macclesfield, SK10 4NP.

If you have a technical problem or a good tip to share, use the form in our Troubleshooter section of Workshop and send it to *PC Home* Troubleshooter at the same address.

CONSUMER NEWS

If you have a hot breaking story that you feel *PC Home* should be aware of, contact Will Sargent on 01625 878888 during office hours.

GAME SOLUTIONS

Got a complete game solution? Know some good hints or cheats? Write to Pete Hawley, Games Editor at the usual *PC Home* address.

SHAREWARE SUBMISSIONS

If you have a dynamic new product that you feel could benefit our MegaDisk, write to Adrian Worrall at the usual *PC Home* address.

FAULTY DISKS/CD-ROMS

If you receive a faulty cover disk it will be replaced free of charge. For CDs contact: PC Wise, Dowlais Top Business Park, Dowlais, Merthyr Tydfil, Mid Glamorgan CF48 2YY. For floppy disks contact TIB PLC, Tib House, 11 Edward Street, Bradford BD4 7BH
If you damage a disk yourself, include a cheque/postal order for £1.85 (per HD 3.5in disk), £2 (CD) and send it to the same address. If the disk was damaged in transit, return it to Europress Direct, Freepost, Ellesmere Port L65 3EB.

SOFTWARE PROBLEMS

If you have any problems running any of the software on the MegaDisks or CD-Rom, contact our helpline 01625 878888 (office hours) on 01625 858084 (out of hours).

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Contact Database Direct on 0151-357 1275

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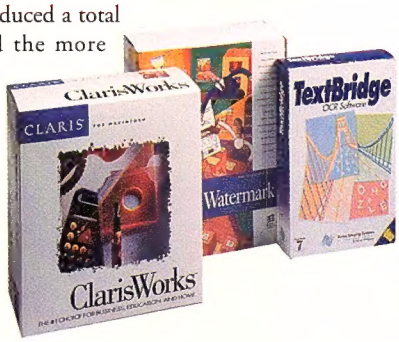

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Disc 1

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In-depth tutorial on page 14

Disc 2

Space Quest 6 – Roger Wilco

THE further adventures of Roger Wilco, space's most embarrassing janitor and ex-starship commander continue in Sierra's latest playable demo of their forthcoming game.

You can load this Windows demo by choosing it from the software menu and clicking on install in the top right hand corner of the screen. This will create an icon in your desktop so you can easily access the game in the future.

This place looks a bit seedy. Should be right at home here

Once it's installed, double click on the SQ6 icon to play. The controls are very simple as everything is controlled by mouse. You can walk Roger around the various screens by left clicking on wherever you want to go.

To interact with any of the surroundings, click on the word that most describes what you want to do – for example if you want to look at a spaceship, click on the word Eye then on the required spaceship.

If at any time you wish to get rid of the Space Quest 6 demo, click on the Install/Uninstall icon and choose Uninstall to remove all traces of the game from your hard disk.

Requires 4Mb of ram, a 486 and Windows
D:\GAMES\ROGER

getting going – MegaDisc 2

THERE are three ways of getting the software from our cover discs. Firstly you can copy the files from the relevant directory on the CD. Each description on these pages shows the directory where you can find the software. An example would be D:\EDUCATE\KIYEKO for the Kiyeko kid's program.

The next method is to run the Dos-based menu, which is faster than Windows DiscMag, the third and friendliest option.

Ensure you are at the Dos prompt and not in Windows, then type D: where D is the letter representing your CD-Rom drive. Then type PCHOME to get into the Dos menu, hit any key to get past the initial screens and use the cursor keys to choose a program. Hit Return and follow the on-screen instructions.

The best way into the Windows section is to pick Run from the File menu in Program Manager. Type D:\PCHWIN.EXE at the cursor and press Return or click on OK. This will load the Windows menu. Choose Install Icon first as this will make the menu available next time you want to use the disc. To install software, choose Software from the DiscMag menu and double click on the name of the program you wish to use.

For the ultimate multimedia mix load up the CD-Rom while reading the magazine to check out our interactive features where we give extra information about articles in the magazine.

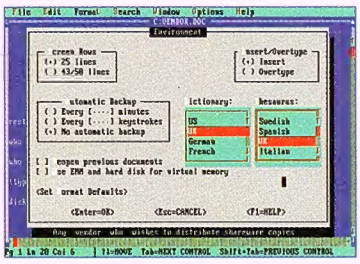
Get even more out of our E3 show report, read an interview with the PC wielding ex-Buzzcock front man Pete Shelley and see video previews of Daedalus Encounter and Bullfrog's eagerly awaited Creation.

Turn to page 20 for need our novice guide to getting up and running.

Examine our enhanced articles and features in Windows DiscMag

word power

THREE of the best shareware wordprocessors are available on this disc – StarWriter and WordExpress for Windows and Galaxy Lite for Dos. See the reviews on page 135.To install the Windows programs, just click on install or run from within the software menu of the DiscMag.



StarWriter has some very professional features like a sophisticated index maker

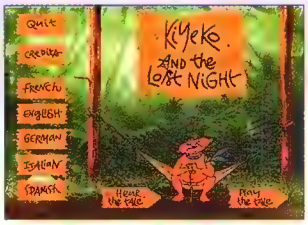
WordExpress needs to be installed and will create an icon for the software, while StarWriter will run straight from the CD.

Galaxy Lite should be installed from the Dos menu accessed by typing PCHOME at the prompt for your CD-Rom drive, usually D:>. Once it has installed, type GLITE from the directory in which you installed it.

All the wordprocessors have intuitive menus and mouse control so you don't have to get into complicated key press combinations in order to learn how to use them.

WordExpress and StarWriter for Windows both require 4Mb ram
Galaxy Lite requires 2Mb ram and a 286
D:\GENERAL\WXPRS1
D:\GENERAL\STARWR
D:\GENERAL\GLITE

PC Home MegaDiscs



▲ *Your guide through the Kiyeko demo shows how to start the quest rolling*

Kiyeko

IF your children like interactive stories they'll love this adventure featuring a little boy called Kiyeko from a village in the South American rain forest.

Your youngsters must help him in his attempts to bring back night to his people, who have been suffering from constant daylight for a long time.

This fully playable interactive demo will take your children through the first few locations. They can either choose to hear the story, or play through it, helping Kiyeko on his way.

To install the demo simply choose Kiyeko from the software menu within the DiscMag and it will install an icon into Program Manager. Double click on this and wait for the introductory screens to clear. The game is very simple – just point the mouse and click.

Requires 4Mb ram, a 486 and Windows in 256 colour mode
D:\EDUCATE\KIYEKO

▲ *Most of the characters are animated – just click on any of them and they'll react*

Rott Ed

WITH this Windows utility you can edit your own Rise of the Triad files to produce exciting new adventures. Note: You must have a full copy of Triad in order to use it.

To install it to your hard drive load Windows then go to File and select Run. Choose Browse and then find the directory in which the program is stored. Click on Rott.Exe and then on OK to install.

Double click the icon to open the initial screen. Open a new level by pulling down the file menu and entering a name followed by the .rtl extension.

The toolbar across the top of the screen has all the icons you'll need to add start locations, walls, textures, enemies and exits.

There are two pages of objects and textures to choose from and altering the screen resolution to 600 x 400 means you'll be able to see them more clearly.

After you have selected the desired textures or objects with the left mouse button you revert to the main edit screen by clicking the right button. Simply clicking and dragging the chosen textures/objects will place them into the level.

If you get stuck or you haven't used an editor of this nature before – such as the Doom editors – the on-help is packed with all the tutorials, hints and techniques you'll ever need.

Requirements: 4Mb ram, Windows, 386
D:\ADDONS\ROTTED

id Classics

ALL the classic id and associated games are here from Wolfenstein 3-D, through Spear of Destiny and Doom, right up to Heretic.

To install, simply go into the Dos menu, choose the game you wish to play by highlighting it with the cursor keys then hit Return. Follow the on-screen instructions to install each product.

Just in case you don't know how to play any of them, help is supplied as read me files which will explain the intricacies of the interface.

Also on the disc are add-ons for our favourite 3-D games. This month it's the turn of Descent and Rise of the Triad, with extra levels for the former and levels and an editor for Triad.

The Rott Editor (see panel) can be run directly from the CD-Rom by choosing it from the software menu of the DiscMag. All the other add-ons can be accessed by their individual directories in the Add-Ons directory. For more information choose Add-Ons from the Dos menu and hit Return

Wolfenstein and Spear of Destiny require a minimum of 2Mb ram and a 386 with VGA graphics
All the other games mentioned require 4Mb and a 486 with VGA graphics
D:\GAMES\WOLF3D
D:\GAMES\SOD
D:\GAMES\DOOM
D:\GAMES\HERETIC
D:\ADD-ONS

Cover CDs

If you are new to PCs and would like to learn more, take a look at our Crash Course on PCs on Disc 2. If you are in Dos enter:
TYPE D:\HELP.TXT |MORE
or from Windows double click on the HELP.TXT file from the D: directory in File Manager

Hi Octane

RACE around a track against a host of computer controlled hovering craft in Bullfrog's latest quality software demo. Use the cursor keys to move around and Z to shoot missiles, X for machine guns and C for a turbo boost. Type DEMO from D:\GAMES\OCTANE to run, or QDEMO to skip the introduction.

Requires 8Mb ram and a 486 with VGA
D:\GAMES\OCTANE

Primal Rage

THE classic arcade beat-'em-up involving huge prehistoric monsters is on its way. Take a look at how they made it with this revealing multimedia presentation. The demo runs straight off the CD-Rom in Windows so just choose it from the software menu of DiscMag.

Requires a 386 with 4Mb ram and Windows to run
D:\PRIMAL

A preview of Primal Rage to get your mouth watering

Lemmings 3-D

THE latest in the long line of Lemmings games joins the 3-D fray with this brand new playable demo. Use your mouse to give the suicidal mammals the ability to avoid their fate by clicking on the function you think they need followed by a simple click on a Lemming. Type SETUP from the D:\GAMES\LEMMINGS directory to configure your sound card, followed by L3D to play.

Requires a 486 with 4Mb ram and VGA graphics
D:\GAMES\LEMMINGS

Ultimate Soccer Manager

TRY your hand at the uncertain world of footy management with this latest business simulator from Impressions. The interface is completely mouse driven so you can experiment and wander around the town layout to various functions. Alternatively, right click to pull up a menu. The game can be run from the CD-Rom – just run SETUP from the D:\GAMES\USMDEMO to configure your sound card then type USM.

Requires a 486 with 4Mb ram and VGA graphics
D:\GAMES\USMDEMO

Dr Drago's Madcap Chase

TAKE turns with your family and friends to play this fun computer based board game. Use the mouse to pull the arm of the slot machine in order to win enough cash to move around the board. Just choose Dr. Drago from the DiscMag software menu and all the installation will be done for you, including the setting up of an icon.

Requires a 386DX with 4Mb ram and Windows
D:\GAMES\DRAGO

Fingers Dual Teacher

EVER wanted to learn how to touch type? Find out if this package is for you by trying out a demo which will teach you a few of the keys so you can see if you're ever likely to get the hang of it. Choose Fingers Dual Teacher from the software menu to install then double click on the icon created to run the software.

Requires a 386 with 2Mb ram and Windows
D:\GENERAL\FINGERS

Mission Critical

LEGEND, the American master adventurers recently snapped up by VIE, are on the verge of finishing their next adventure extravaganza. To a look at the demo just choose Mission Critical from the Dos menu or type DEMO from the D:\GAMES\MISSION directory.

Requires a 486 with 4Mb ram
D:\GAMES\MISSION

shareware edutainment

FIVE of the most up-to-date edutainment packages also appear on the disc – Big Math Attack, Hickory-Dickory-Doc, Math-o-Rama, Roxie's Math Fish, Talk ABCs and Wonder Word. All are in the D:\EDUCATE sub directory, with a separate directory for each program. Only Roxie's Math Fish works under Windows; it can be easily installed from the DiscMag software menu. The remainder should be installed from the Dos Menu by typing PCHOME at the D:> prompt.

Require a 286 with 2Mb ram except Roxie's Math Fish which needs a 386 to run under Windows
D:\EDUCATE

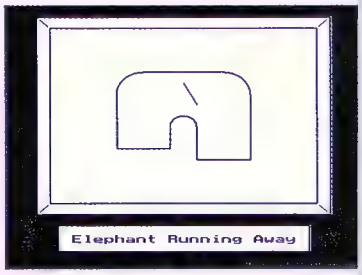
shareware games

THERE are four great games on this month's CD-Rom. Chomper is a Pac-Man clone in which you use the cursor keys to move around. Type INSTALL from the D:\GAMES\CHOMPER directory, followed by CHOMPER to play.

Dicey is a Yhatzee type game for Windows – after installing the icon from the software menu in the DiscMag and double clicking on it, hit F2 to start playing and F12 to stop. Thingies is something like Dingbats or the TV show Catchphrase, where you are shown a pictorial clue which cleverly hides a phrase, famous saying or just something clever. To install it, type INSTALL C, where C is the letter referring to your hard drive, from the D:\GENERAL\THINGIES directory.

Fuzzy's World of Miniature Golf is a crazy golf game set in space. To hit the ball around the courses click on it and drag the power direction bar in the opposite direction to which you want the ball to go. To install type INSTALL from the D:\GAMES\FUZZY directory, then FUZZY to play.

Eat dots and fruit while avoiding the ghosts in Chomper



Find out what an elephant looks like from behind with Thingies

All require a 286 with 2Mb of ram except Golf which needs a 386 with 4Mb and Dicey which requires a 386 with 4Mb and Windows
D:\GAMES\CHOMPER
D:\READERS\FILDOWNS
D:\GENERAL\THINGIES
D:\GAMES\FUZZY

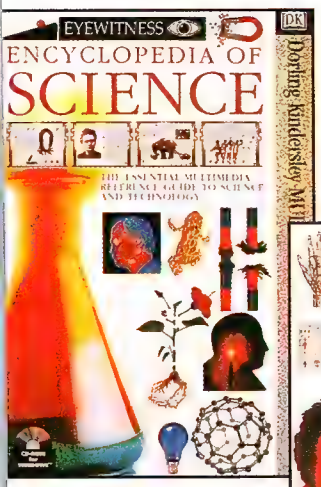
Flying Colours

ARE you fed up with washed out Windows colours? You need Flying Colours – and it runs straight of the CD-Rom. Just choose the Flying Colours option from the DiscMag software menu.

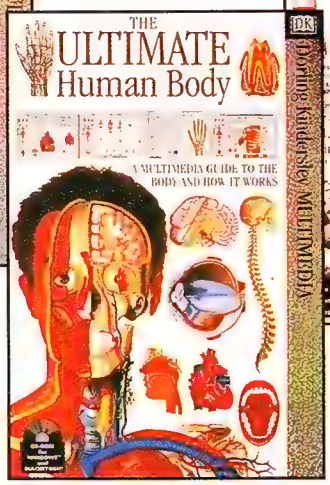
Requires 386 with 2Mb ram and 256 colour Windows
D:\GENERAL\FCOLOR

"The best discs ever"

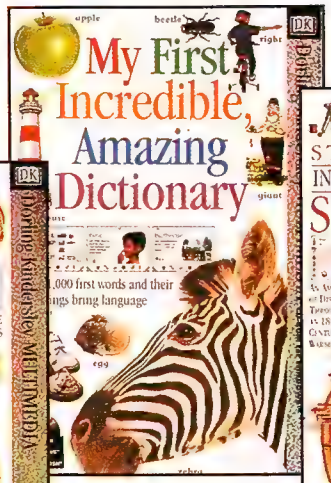
CD-ROM TODAY



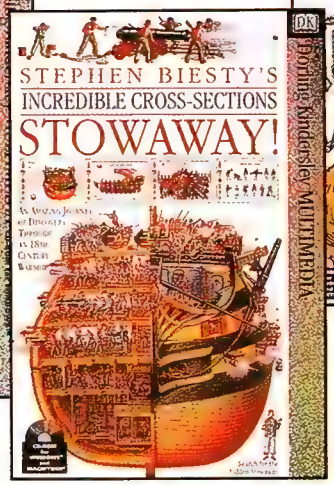
"The most dazzling, drop-dead gorgeous piece of science software ever seen"
TES



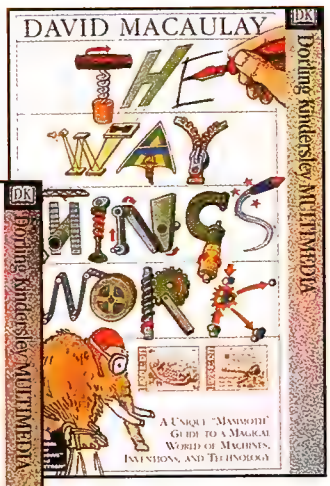
WINNER
Education category
MILIA Awards



WINNER
Children's category
International
EMMA Awards



"A fascinating multimedia tour of an 18th century man-of-war ship"
FINANCIAL TIMES



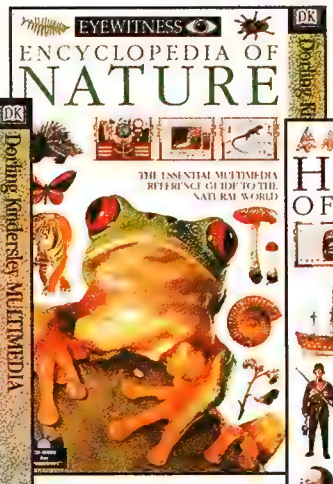
WINNER
Science & Natural History category
MILIA AWARD

•

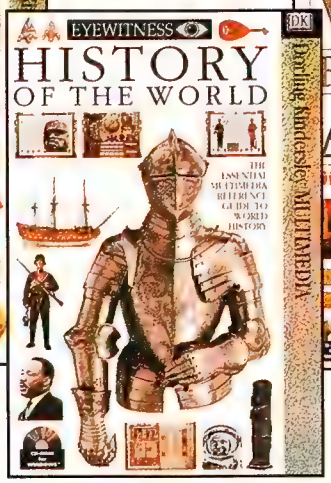
Best Education Disc
CD-ROM TODAY

Dorling Kindersley Multimedia

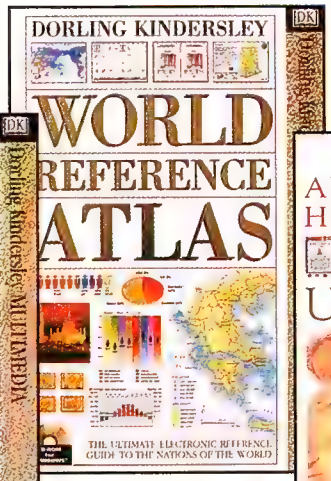
Available June



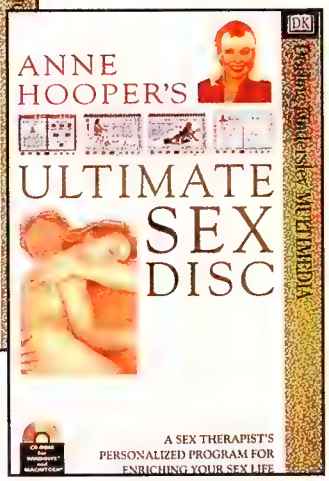
Available June



Available June



Available July



Available July

Lower prices-even better value

Cover CDs

To run this Windows program, select File, Run in Program Manager and type D:\PCHWIN.EXE

Time

SOFTKEY'S Time Almanac of the 1990s presents a selection of articles collated from the pages of *Time* magazine. The disc is packed with text files, images and video clips giving a comprehensive guide to the momentous events of the final decade of the century.

The main screen offers access to two photo-based articles, The Changing Face of America and The New Russia at the top. Below come a selection of Time covers representing the years from 1989 to 1994.

Further down is a set of three almanacs offering information on the individual US states, the US as a whole and the rest of the world.

Clicking on either of the photo features takes you through a slick voiced-over slideshow with a selection of morphs included as part of the Changing Face of America feature.

Select any of the Time covers for a features list for that year as well as a set of icons down one side for accessing video clips, photo images and Man of the Year features. Clicking on the icons will take you to a selection menu or run you through a slideshow.

The Articles list comprises a set of headings in red, a list of feature groupings indicated by a small book and a list of individual features, each indicated by a document style icon.

Clicking on the feature groups either opens or closes the book revealing or concealing the documents contained within. Clicking on a feature produces a scrolling text box with the body of the article inside it.

Buttons across the bottom of the screen give access to the various functions on offer, and the researcher contains a log of the areas you have passed through.

Clicking on any item in this list takes you straight back to them and the Menu button calls up the main screen from anywhere within the Almanac.

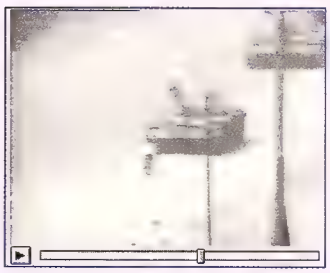
The Back button switches to the previous menu/selection screen, while the Previous, Next, Search and Print buttons are self explanatory.

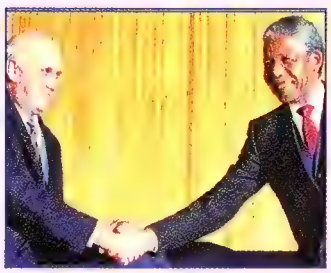
The Copy button allows you to copy any text selected to the Windows clipboard to paste into other Windows applications, while the Mark button adds bookmarks to help keep track of the articles which interest you.

The Note button allows notes to be attached, and if help is needed the relevant button offers comprehensive assistance.

The Newsquest button offers a simple built-in game that sets the task of tracking down quotes and information from articles on the CD. It's a good way of leafing through heaps of articles to which

The main menu offers access to the CIA World fact book, the photo journal features and the year by year list of Time articles



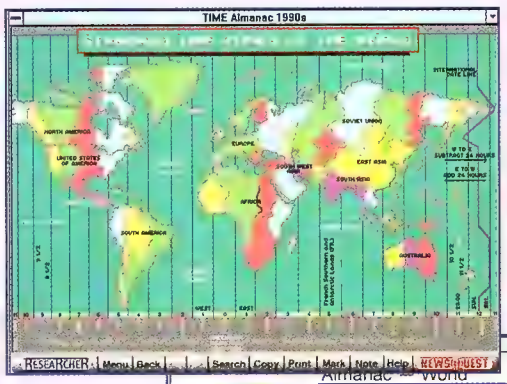


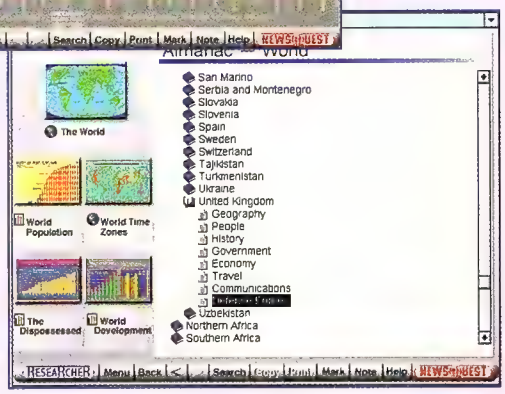
Numerous stills and video clips accompany the historic events of the decade

Previously sold for £46.99

Almanac Tutorial

The interface is simple and intuitive – you'll get to grips with it in a few minutes





The World Almanac is based around the CIA World Fact Book although Time have added plenty of graphics to this text-only resource

you wouldn't normally give a second glance.

The World Almanac is based around the CIA World fact book and includes cursory information on every country you've ever heard of and probably a few you haven't. The information includes, political, geographic, demographic, economic and historical categories.

The USA almanac and state guide contains similar information although at much greater length. These fact book sections work in exactly the same way as the main body of the Almanac and plenty of graphs and charts are scattered about to help explain key concepts and significant statistics.

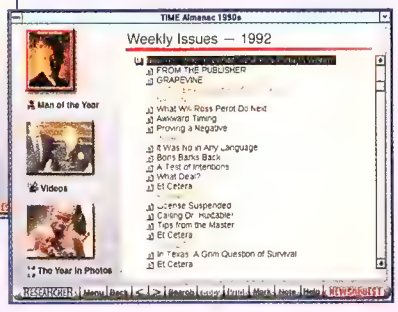
So as well as a whole host of features and articles that offer a comprehensive view of the character of modern-day America and the people who influence it you also get a whole slew of facts and figures about the world.

The content is predictably geared towards the States, being derived from *Time* magazine, but as well as extensive coverage of home issues a broad range of overseas incidents are included.

The fall of the Berlin Wall, Tiananmen Square, the Soviet coup and the Bosnian conflict are all covered, from a distinctly American view point of course. This also offers a glimpse of America's attitude to the rest of the world as well as a list of major events since 1989.

Coverage of momentous events like the Exxon Valdez oil spill, the San Francisco earthquake, the LA riots, the Waco massacre, the US debacle in Somalia and the Gulf War rub shoulders with the Hubble space telescope repairs and articles on date rape and breast cancer.

All in all, it's an interesting mix which practically guarantees that you'll find something of interest. ■



The interface is simple and intuitive – you'll get to grips with it in a few minutes

Save £10 with Softkey

For full details on how you can save money when purchasing Softkey CD packs I and II, turn to page 128.

Peripheral required
for playing
Computer Scrabble

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U.S. and/or other countries.

HD Megadisks

Disk 1

Rise of the Triad Editor

ONE of the better Doom clones of late is this offering from Apogee. It's based on the simpler Wolfenstein engine and has to be one of the most violent and gore-infested, first-person blasts to date.

Well now you have the opportunity to create your own death fests and arenas of blood letting with this fully featured Windows editor. You need the full version of Rise of the Triad installed on the hard disk and all you have to do is tell the editor where the main game file lies, usually in C:\rise.

All the textures and objects are extracted from the files and then it's up to you to drop and drag them on to your new level. If you create a level please send it in to Pete Hawley at the usual address and we'll test it on the network. The best wads will go on the disk.

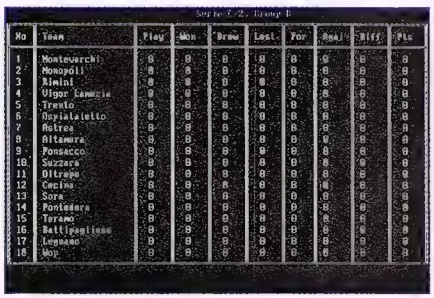
Requirements: Windows, 386, 2Mb

Italian Football Manager

TAKE your European super team from the bottom of the Serie to the top of Serie A. Choose your name, team name, strip colours and then embark on a season of player transfers, injuries and by-line headaches.

The tables and stats are a definite statistical dream and although the game is heavily text based, the engine is a more than admirable one for hours of hair pulling management nightmares.

Requirements: Dos, 286, 640k



▲ *More exciting football management action in the statistical Italian dream*

Select the team colours before you venture on to the top of Serie A ▶

▲ *Get the kids to select the corresponding letter on the keyboard and name the objects*

Talking ABCs

THIS is a cross between a simple typing tutor and a vocabulary tool. The simple beach scene at the start of the program gives kids the opportunity to take a look at the surroundings and then guess the first letters of the names of the objects that appear.

All the names are spoken through the PC speaker and although the pronunciations are American it is a good way for children to learn their way around the keyboard and the names and spellings of the animals and objects.

Requirements: DOS, 286, 640k

Flying Colours

THIS handy Windows utility changes the colour schemes and look of your basic set-up. Although you can do this with the control panel, Flying Colours has many other features that will give you more choice.

Select the colours you want from the simple palette display and click OK to initiate the changes.

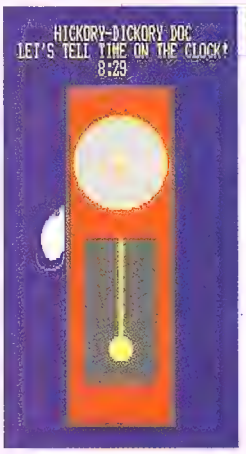
Requirements: Windows, 386, 2Mb

treasure trove

P-p-p-pick up a Pentium! Turn to our competition on page 58

Disk 2

Cover HDs



Hickory Dickory Dock, the mouse ran up the clock and here he is!

Hickory Dickory Dock

A SIMPLE time-telling educational game for kids. Follow the on-screen instructions and one after another various clock faces will appear showing different times.

Simply get the kids to read the hands of the clock and type in the correct answer.

The graphics are very bright and cheerful and the reward for guessing the right time is a simple tune and melody.

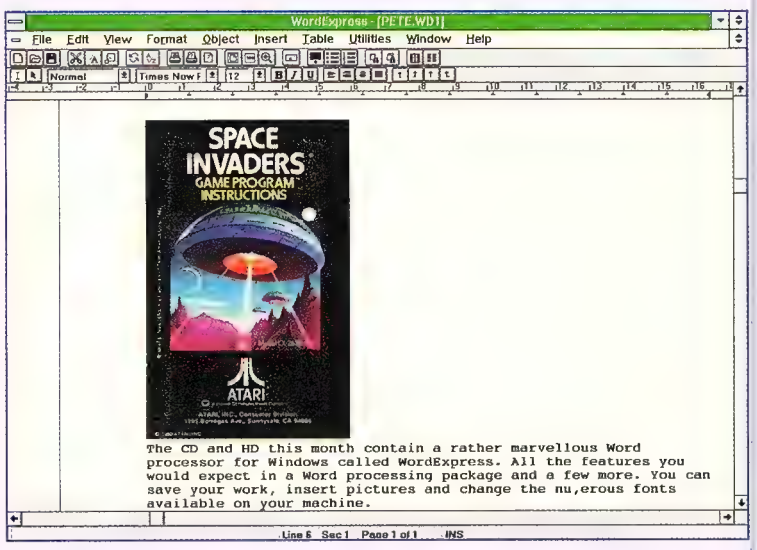
Requirements: Dos, 286, 640k

Word Express

PROBABLY one of the best shareware wordprocessors available. This Windows product has all the features you would expect to see plus a few additions only found in full priced commercial packages – the ability to insert pictures, a font manager, save, print and edit features and much more.

The files you produce can be saved out in a number of formats including Word Expresses own extension, text and rich text. Once you've finished the document the processor automatically uses Windows defaults for printing, the fonts available and the essential print manager.

Requirements: Windows, 386, 2Mb



Insert pictures in a variety of formats and create your own documents

If you have a problem running any software, first go to page 14 for help. If you still need assistance, ring the hotline on 01625 858084

Guide the fat yellow person around the maze eating as much as possible

Chomper

HOT on the heels of Space Invaders all those years ago came a game that changed the face of electronic entertainment, Pac-Man, and this is very similar.

All you have to do is guide the fat yellow bloke around the maze, eat all the dots and avoid the ghosties. Chomp the power pellets to power up and eat the ghosts to send them back to their pen. Don't attempt to eat them when they start to flash, though.

Requirements: Dos, 286, 640k

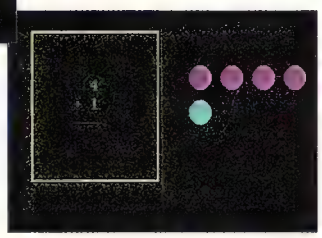
Mathrama

BASIC mathematics is something all kids need to know before they embark on their full time schooling and this simple Dos-based program is a great introduction. At the start the sums are incredibly easy, and as the game progresses they become increasingly difficult.

Simply hitting the correct number on the top row of the keyboard, not the number pad, moves players on to the next sum until they've had enough and want to play a different game from the menu.

Requirements: Dos, 286, 640k

I thank you – another right answer to add to my high score



Simple addition to start with but can Lance Concannon make it to the next level?

- Which brand offers you a range of excellent educational software from critically acclaimed publisher **Sanctuary Woods?**
- Which brand offers you a range of educational software with a variety of genres, eg Maths, English, Geography?
- Which brand includes titles that have been **localised** into **UK English** (ie includes English voices)?
- Which brand offers you **quality** educational titles at an **affordable** price of only **£19.99 RRP** each?
- Which brand includes educational titles that **conform** to the **National Curriculum?**
- Which brand offers a range of educational software that includes titles that offer **more than just talking books**, but **fully** interactive products?
- Which brand of educational software is offering **£250,000** worth of **free software** to **UK schools?**
- Which brand of educational software is **available now** from all key retailers?

Disk help

megadisk help

absolute beginners

TO start using the MegaDisk, turn on your computer.

When it has finished doing its business you may either be at a flashing cursor – the Dos prompt – or in Windows, depending on how your system is set up.

If you are in the latter, you will need to exit because you can't generally use the disk within the environment unless the instructions tell you otherwise.

The Dos prompt tells you which drive you are on. When you first turn on your computer you will find this may read C:\ > indicating you are on drive C, your hard drive.

To use the MegaDisk, you will need to insert it into your floppy drive A or B.

Once you have done this, type A: or B:, depending on the drive you have selected.

When this is complete you may safely install the software on the MegaDisks.

installing the software

WITH all the PC Home software, there is an easy-to-use menu or instructions to install the programs to your hard drive simply and effectively. Just follow this guide:

1. Log on to the drive containing the MegaDisk by typing A: or B: depending on the drive the disk is in.
2. Now type PCHOME C where C is the letter of your hard drive.
3. You will now be presented with the Mega-Disk menu
4. With the menu, select the number of the software and follow any onscreen instructions.
5. To quit the menu at any time press 0. You can then move to the drive on which you have installed the programs.

faulty disk?

THE coverdisks are thoroughly tested at every stage of production, but inevitably when such a large batch is duplicated, one or two bad ones may slip through.

Return faulty HDs to;
TIB PLC
Tib House, 11 Edward Street, Bradford BD4 7BH

Return faulty CDs to;
PC Wise
Daulais Top, Merthyr Tydfil, Mid Glamorgan CF48 2YY

disclaimer

THE *PC Home* disks are checked thoroughly at every stage of production for suitability, compatibility and functionality.

Each program supplied to you is checked vigorously with at least four independent virus checking programs.The disks, once compiled are duplicated under strict quality control and batch tested to ensure standards are maintained. IDG Media will accept no responsibility for any damage or loss caused by their use or mis-use.

what you need to run our cd

SOME programs require extended memory and some require expanded memory to run.

The amount of EMS and XMS that your computer makes available can be changed by editing CONFIG.SYS which you should find in the root directory of C drive.

To edit this file all that you have to do is to type:

```
EDIT CONFIG.SYS
```

when you are at the C:\> prompt. Generally in this file you should find the line:

```
DEVICE=C:\DOS\HIMEM.SYS
```

This line instructs the computer to turn all of your computer's memory into extended memory.

If you need to configure your machine with some expanded memory you will need to add the following lines to your CONFIG.SYS file:

```
DEVICE=C:\DOS\HIMEM.SYS
DEVICE=C:\DOS\EMM386.EXE
DOS=HIGH,UMB
```

Remember that once you have made changes to any of your system files you must save the file and re-boot for the changes to take effect.

Included on the CD is a detailed help file.

You can use this file to solve most of the common computer problems and give yourself a basic knowledge of things such as Dos and boot sequences.

To take a look at this file use any text editor such as Dos Edit. To load the file in to Dos Edit type:

```
EDIT D:\HELP.TXT
```

where D is the letter of your CD-Rom drive.

We also include this file on one of the HD disks when there is enough space.

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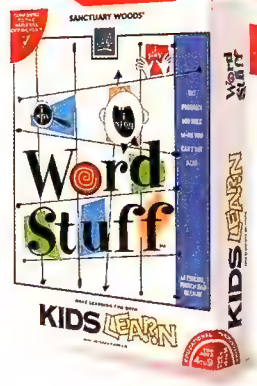

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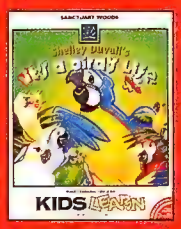

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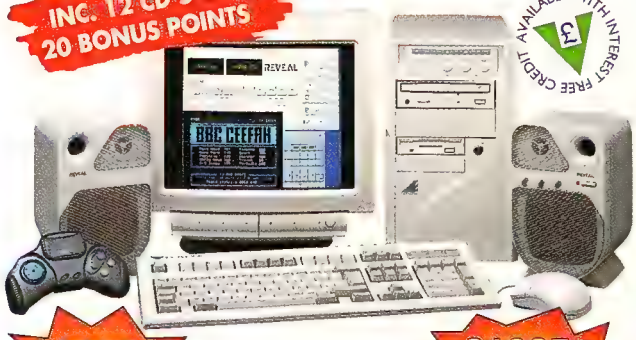

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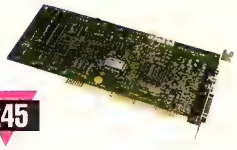

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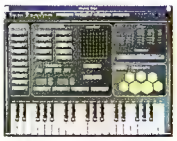

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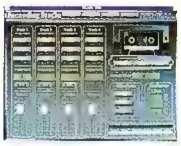

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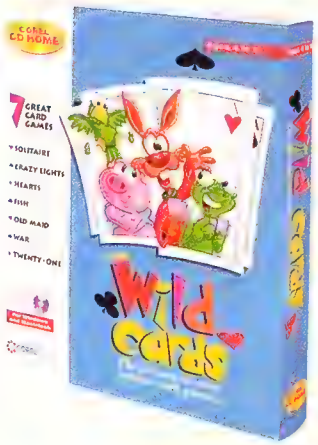

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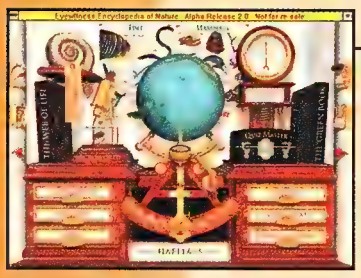
the breakfast table

Sit down and have a coffee as you peruse everything that's new in the home PC world, from shareware to CDs and the latest news

news 26

All the latest stories including Electronic Arts' £4m interactive movie investment



cd showcase 39

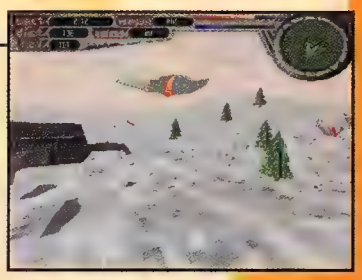
Resident DJ Andy Shaw spins a selection of the latest releases on compact disc

shareware scene 48

Terminal Velocity and Space Golf: Just two of the items in Andrew Wright's round-up

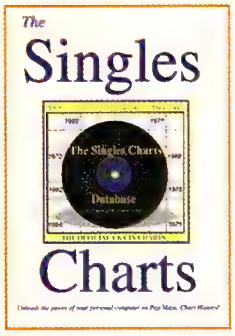
write home 51

The pages you write yourselves. If you've something to say, we want to read about it



Consumer

Summer is traditionally a quiet time for the computer industry. Will Sargent shatters that myth, bringing more news than ever



Just how long did Joe Dolcie stay at No.1 with Shudappa yer face? Find out from this archive of top 40 chart data

The singles charts

ARTISTS, record labels, song titles and music charts are comprehensively recorded in this new five-disk (floppy) release from Capelrig Information Solutions (01589 131638).

The data has been collated from *Music Week* magazine and the Chart Information Network and spans from the days of black and white TV, the Stones and the fab-four to 1994.

Twenty analysis tools can be applied to the data, so detailed questions such as: *How many of Jason Donovan's Top 40 entries made it to number 1?* and *Why did Jason Donovan ever bother picking up a guitar?* can be asked – well, the first question, at least.

EA are using real sets to film The Darkening, thus freeing them from the constraints of 2-D computer generated sets – Pan. Zoom. Action!

Christopher Walken – remember the bit about the watch in Pulp Fiction – is currently preparing to be digitised

EA backing £4m movie

SCHEDULED for release early next year, The Darkening is Europe's answer to Hollywood's lead in the PC CD-Rom interactive movie arena.

Scripted by Diane Duane, who wrote for Star Trek TNG, and currently being filmed at Pinewood studios, Berkshire, the latest Origin/Electronic Arts game boasts the biggest budget line-up of actors since the same partnership brought Mark Hamill and John Rhys-Davies work in Wing Commander III, last Christmas.

Leading out the cast, Oscar-winning Christopher Walken – Pulp Fiction and The Deerhunter – joins no less than 50 other actors and 500 extras!

Other famous names include John Hurt (starring most recently in Rob Roy), Clive Owen (Chancer), Jorgen Prochnow (Das Boot, Body of Evidence), Amanda Pays and Brian Blessed.

A planned six weeks of filming precedes programming of the game code, which is to be written entirely in the UK by Origin at EA's Manchester base.

Unlike previous interactive adventure games we have seen featuring full-motion-video actors – Under A Killing Moon, Daedalus Encounter and 11th Hour spring to mind, the 16mm digital film will not be simply pasted over a computer-generated set.

Instead, 28 separate sets have been built at Pinewood, specifically for this one-off production's planned three hours of final-cut film. EA's Dave Wilson is confident that the new project wil be a vast improvement over any game we have seen incorporating real actors. He told me: "Using real sets, as opposed to green-screen filming means that we can be a lot more flexible with the camera-work

"Panning and zooming have never been possible with the old techniques. Coupled with some new video compression techniques, The Darkening will be technologically and visually superior to anything w have done before.

" It's going to have more in common with Wing Commander II than a game like Under A Killing Moon. Apart from the interaction with other FMV-characters, there will be lots of computer-generated sequences.

"For example, when flying between planets and taking on one of the many missions presented in the game".

PC Home is in the process of arranging a day at Pinewood for a bit of a chin-wag with the stars and a look at the sets. Keep your eyes on the Under Development section of *The Games Room* for future updates. Electronic Arts can be contacted on 01753 549442.

Pinewood studios, Berkshire, is the setting for Europe's biggest interactive movie project yet

news

Explore with Microsoft

EXCLUSIVE FIRST LOOK!!!

WHAT seemed like a bit of a lull for releases under the Microsoft *Home* label has turned into a balmy summer spate of non-stop launches, starting with a new kids' encyclopaedia and a collection of special interest CD-Roms.

Aimed at the under-10s, Explorapaedia – The World of Nature is just about ready for the UK market and *PC Home* has had a sneak-preview of this new educational title.

It's the first of three Explorapaedia releases – preceding a disc about human achievements called World of People and an unnamed science-based product planned for early next year.

All the textual content is narrated by a collection of youngsters, so your own can be left with their new Microsoft friends to explore the 200 or so plants and animals featured.

Exploring coral reefs. Just one of the nature topics to be given the Explorapaedia treatment

In style with many new multimedia releases, clicking anywhere on the screen brings some sort of response from the interface. Frequent visits from Tad the friendly tour guide frog ensures no one gets lost in the various sections.

A new *interactivities* idea has been incorporated to encourage further exploration. In some of the 24 different interactive games, young users are asked to put the correct name badges on to different animals.

The Easyball is a new input device for kids. It's bundled with the explorapaedia titles for £44.99

A new pricing structure for the *Home* range means that Microsoft stockists will be selling the new encyclopaedias for £35 each (or £44.99 with a trackball designed specifically for your kids).

Microsoft are currently anglicising the content of their Bookshelf and Encarta titles, in preparation for an imminent '95 version of 'Shelf and the all new Encarta, which will be out for Christmas.

Rough Guides via modem

WORLD-renowned London travel-guide publishers *Rough Guides* have announced that they are to launch a World Wide Web site in October which will feature the full on-line edition of USA – The Rough Guide.

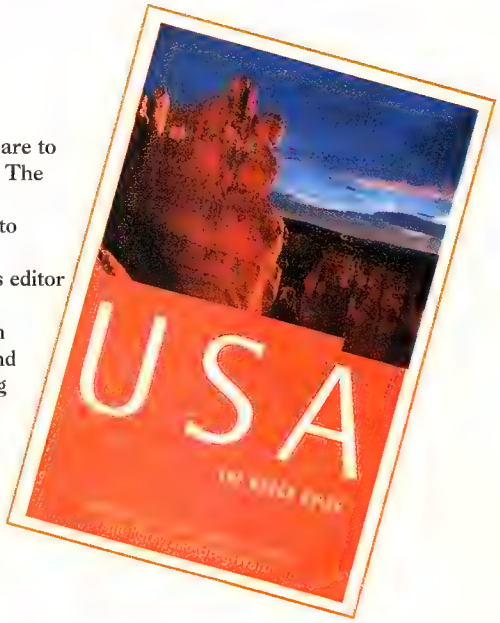
Working with Internet multimedia specialists HotWired, plans for the site include hotlinks to accommodation, entertainment and information sites noted in the book.

"This ambitious project has so much potential," said Mark Ellingham, joint MD and series editor of the Rough Guides.

"Internet users will be able to search for any town in America and get detailed information back about that specific place. Before long, this will include hypertext links to photographs and in-depth coverage of museums, galleries and hotels in the book. We'll put links into everything we can think of".

Rough Guides are launching, simultaneously, a UK-based site which will hold an on-line version of their rock music guide, which, like the project with HotWired, will commence in October.

Plans to introduce on-line editions of the Rough Guide series on Europe are also currently underway. For information about the UK site and the expanding range of rough guide travel companions call 0171-379 3329.



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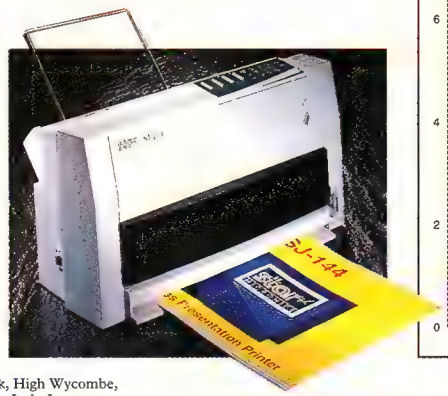

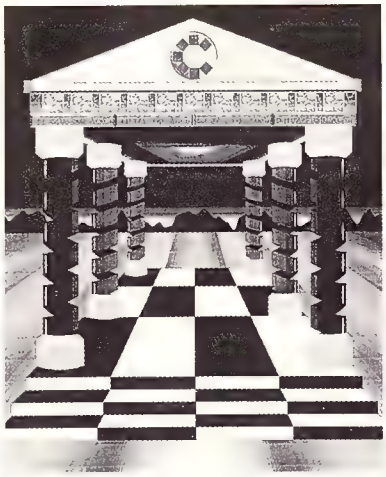

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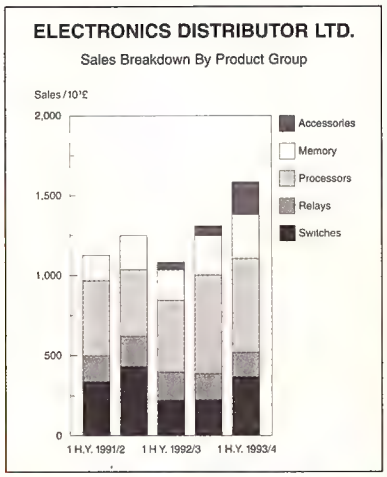

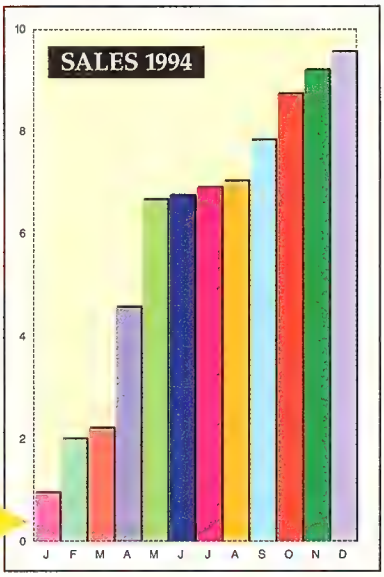

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MOVING smoothly from Dos to Windows, EasyCAD is a low-cost computer-aided design package for those with design needs on a budget. All the tools are there to create professional level 2-D plans with pin-point accuracy. Developed by FastCAD Europe 01923 246427, the latest version costs £125.

JOBNET is the first on-line national employment agency. Reed Personal Services – the largest in the UK – are hoping that surfers will deposit their CVs at the site, which can then be matched with a job offer in one of their 14 separate divisions. Contact details are available for over 200 branches in the country.
http://www.reed.co.uk/reed/

THE National Gallery are releasing a bundled CD-Rom and book catalogue of their entire collection. It will contain detailed information about the permanent collection and any loans – permanent and long term.

Plans are afoot to sell the CD-Rom separately, but for the time being, the disc and book are sold together for £94 (or just the book for £34). Available from National Gallery Publications (0171-839 8544) and major High Street book shops.

CD plus is the new user-friendly standard for mixed audio and video CDs, soon to become the standard for listening and watching pop-videos through the new Windows 95 operating system.

We've received one of the first, developed by a group called Nyack. On top of the 11 audio tracks you get visual control of the disc through Nyack's Eleven Track Player. Videos and photos of exclusive performances and other indie-jangly stuff accompany the toons.

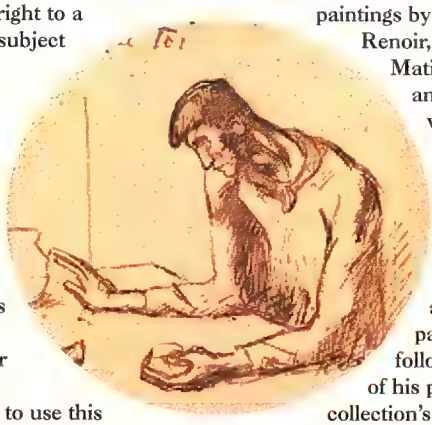
World Chess Champion, Gary Kasparov avenges an earlier defeat, by trouncing his 120MHz Pentium-driven opponent in the latest round of the Intel World Chess Grand Prix. Winning 1.5 to the Pentium's 0.5, Kasparov commented after the blitz tournament: "The computer is getting stronger and stronger, more and more dangerous and games with the computer require quite a different preparation"

Doors open to private gallery

Music Lesson by Matisse. Hidden from art-lovers for more than 70 years

BILL Gates created the privately held Corbis Corporation back in 1989 to concentrate solely on the building of an archive of valuable *digital content.*

Six years on, the company owns the digital copyright to a broad range of subject matter, which includes thousands of specialist images from the areas of science and technology, world cultures, history, fine arts and more.



A Passion for Art is the first multimedia title to use this massive resource. It is also a little bit special because it shows, for the first time, the private art collection of the Barnes Foundation which has been locked away from the public eye for nigh on 70 years.

The collection of French impressionist and post-impressionist paintings by such masters as Renoir, Cezanne, Matisse, Gauguin and van Gough was amassed by Dr Barnes, an eccentric business entrepreneur, who eventually refused all access to the 330 paintings following criticism of his private collection's credibility. Watch out next month for a full review..

Consumer news

I.M.Meen

SLOPPY writing will be severely punished. At least this is one of the threats from Simon & Schuster's novel new learning adventure, I.M.Meen.

Taking much inspiration from 3-D isometric romps like Doom, the disc has been designed to make learning more fun than frustrating. It combines fast action with

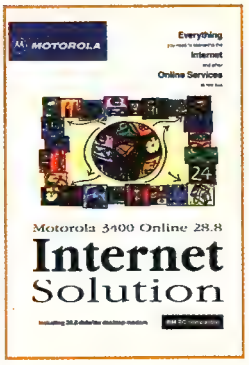
This is a novel idea – Doom meets boring grammar lessons. Gotta have something to ease the pain

lots of gruelling grammar tests en route and is targeted at nine-year-olds and above.

Students of the sinister librarian, I.M.Meen must test their reflexes by avoiding giant spiders, ratmen and gargoyles, while simultaneously correcting the nasty old man's bad grammar through a series of scrolls.

Distributed in the UK through Ablac (01626 332233), I.M.Meen costs £32.95 . Watch out for a full review next month.

Consumer news



Motorola Internet solution

SETTING up your stall on the Internet isn't as easy as many make it out to be. In fact, when most PC users are faced with choices between new Protocol, FTP and WWW browser software, they'll run, hide and never come back.

To simplify the process of getting out there, Motorola have brought together what, in their opinion, is the best collection of software to do each of the necessary background tasks while you are wandering on line.

A fast, Motorola 28.8 Data/Fax modem is the main component and should see you well into the future – as the present comms standard is half this speed.

Cables to connect the modem to the mains and then to your PC accompany a collection of Delrina comms programs applications, which take care of the aforementioned software worries.

An animated program is shipped with the pack to help you install and set up the kit. Stockists include Byte and Toys R Us (£235) Motorola can be found on 01293 401628.

Move over Cyberia, everything these sixth-formers need to get out and about on the information superhighway is on their doorstep at Cafe 2001

Break-time in cyberspace

STUDENTS at Richard Huish sixth-form college in Taunton celebrated the opening of the first in-school cyber-cafe this month.

Named Cafe 2001 and officially approved by sci-fi novelist Arthur C. Clarke, it offers the 900 students unlimited access to the unparalleled educational data resource of the net over a break-time cuppa.

Bill Perry, IT manager for the school, developed the idea following a request from the principal, calling in education specialists RM plc to connect them up.

He told us: "It gives our 16 to 18-year-olds a taste of the kind of IT access now only found at universities. We have lots of plans, including the installation of dedicated table-top consoles and an out-of-school-time pass system whereby students and members of the public without Internet access at home can, for a minimal charge, use our connection for their research".

A money-saving Point of Presence (Pop) has been established to keep running costs at a minimum.

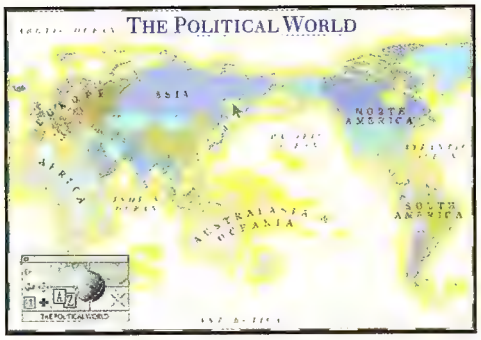
Consequently, distance learning and connectivity to other educational establishments in the area will be possible in the future, with only local BT call-charges to be met by any new, outside links.

Contact RM plc 01235 826000 for further details about their Internet for Learning *Eduweb* project.

Dorling buds bloom

RESPECTED child book publishers, and now vying for top position in the electronic publishing arena, Dorling Kindersley continue their march to software stardom with more UK-centric releases for the summer.

Arriving soon after the release of the new science and nature encyclopaedias, the two latest titles World Reference Atlas and Anne Hooper's Ultimate Sex Disc bring the contents of their disc shelf to 10.



Dorling Kindersley's new summer launch, the World Reference Atlas arrives after the exams. Who's for some early revision for next time round?

Based on Anne Hooper's half-million selling book, The Ultimate Sex Disc offers three hours of audio, 60 minutes of "stimulating video" and the opportunity to rate your sexual motivation.

Somewhat less erotic, but of considerable value to those studying the geographical mysteries of planet, the World Reference Atlas has the same look and feel of previous DK CD and paper-based publications – colourful pictures to catch the younger eye and lots of cross referencing.

The atlas database can be searched on over 25,000 different place names while pop-up windows containing recent data about population, natural resources and climate will give more information once there.

The atlas is available now for £69. The sex guide will be available in September, also for £69. Dorling Kindersley can be contacted on 0171-836 5411.

SNIPPETS

id's new monster, Quake, is still on schedule for a pre-Christmas release. American McGee, one of the designers at id told us at E3: "Quake is now up and running in network games, the level design is well under way and the engine is almost completely finished".

No monsters to speak of at the moment but the environment is coming along marvellously. Real-time lighting effects, multi-layered areas, headset and microphone support are to be included in the final version.

The only definite weapon will be a Thor-like hammer and all the objects and characters will be affected by the ultra-realistic gravity algorithms.

True 3-D, experience points for players, headsets and an infinite number of people playing over a network.

WE stated in our July review of BTL software's educational title Forces & Effects that it cost £117.48. This is the price for the schools' version. A single-user, home version costs only £39.99. BTL are on 01274 841320.

Actua Soccer. Something to beat FIFA on the 3DO?

HAVING recently celebrated their 10th birthday, Gremlin Interactive are about to prove they're still in the game. Among the wave of new releases is a rather splendid 3-D footy game called Actua Soccer.

Brian Moore is said to be interested in doing the in-game commentary and Chris Woods was in the Gremlin offices last week working up a sweat in their motion capture studios. More behind-the-scenes news on Actua Soccer next month.

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on't think that because it's free it's low-quality shareware nts and art. All the fonts are professional, foundry quality and cover a vast range of styles ranging from elegant and formal to wild and wacky. The clipart is supplied as colour Windows Metafiles (.WMF) so it's scalable to any size with perfect quality and definitely no ugly "jaggies".

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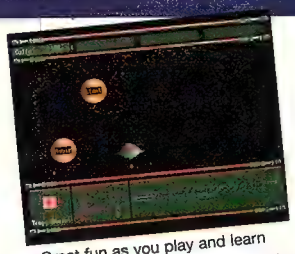

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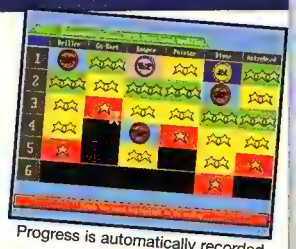
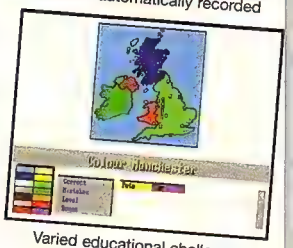


Progress is automatically recorded



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SNIPPETS

HELP is always at hand at the Samaritans. They are expanding their emotional support network to the Internet this month and E-mails to Jo@samaritans.org will bring an E-mailed response within 24 hours. Anonymity is assured through mailing your worries to samaritans@anon.penet.fi.

SMARTSURF is a free Windows package that will monitor the cost of on-line connection while browsing CompuServe and any other on-line service. It sits in the corner of your screen virtually unnoticed, totting up the cost of calls when any connection is made. Download the program from http://www.smartcode.com – from CompuServe it's in library 4 of UKSHARE forum.

MOST mouse-balls are the same size – 22mm in diameter to be precise. CPS (01772 654455) have introduced a new, non-slip range which they sell in packs of 10. If your mouse-pointer is getting a little jittery, it could be because its ball is scratched or worn smooth, so save yourself the cash on a new plastic rodent and replace it.

THE much rumoured CD-i on-a-card is to be manufactured by IPC Corporation, following a deal with Philips.

Running dedicated CD-i games and educational titles, MPEG and CD-i videos, the card comes bundled with its own CD-Rom player – which seems a bit of a waste for those with compatible CD-Rom drives already fitted to their machines.

Philips and IPC will jointly produce and market the new card, first to appear in the States for approximately $500

In last month's travel feature we looked at two titles from the AA's mapping division. Unfortunately we gave you the old prices for their two products: MileMaster2 and MileMaster2 Home. These are now sold for £70 and £25 respectively.

This price reduction is to move them in-line for new Windows versions, both of which are due any minute.

Also, the telephone number we gave for Home-grown Product's CD-Rom release - Gates to the Underworld - was incorrect. Try 0181-561 5040 if you want more information.

Screenshots are cool. huh-uh-uh-h-huh-huh, etc.

Viacom's Beavis and Butt

THE word *Viacom* will probably bring visions of MTV to most people's minds but the American media giants, like every other media outfit with potential content copyright, are slowly spreading their tentacles into the interactive PC industry.

First up will be the game of the film of the book, *Congo*, penned by Midas touch author, Michael Crichton. A rather strange puzzle game for Windows called Zoop and the inevitable interactive tie-in with Viacom's cult asset – Beavis and Butt-head, will follow soon after.

Beavis and Butt-Head will run in Windows and because the company own the rights to the duo, all the game animation and voices have been re-created by the original team.

EA up and running on Web

AS reported in last month's net.stuff pages EA have opened a site on the World Wide Web. It's now up and running and for a net new-born it's looking rather healthy – especially if you're using the new Netscape browser.

All the affiliated EA labels have their own section devoted to past, present and future games including Origin, Delphine, Sports and Europe's finest, Bullfrog.

Just point your browser to: http://www.ea.com/. Download new screen shots, read interview transcripts, get all the late breaking news from EA and any information you need regarding game upgrades, patches and editors.

Management by E-mail

TEAM 17 are a company renowned for producing high quality arcade blasts for the Amiga and now the PC. Recently bought by Ocean, they have moved away from the frenetic blast-'em-ups of days gone by, and are putting the finishing touches to a new style of football management game.

What's 5 per cent of £8.5m again?

"Not another one!" we hear you cry. But wait, they are promising a completely different slant on this well-hammered genre – by playing over the Internet. Players will buy access software and then E-mail their game turns to Team 17 HQ each week.

There will be hundreds of leagues running at the same time and at the end of a week the results for your team and appropriate league will be mailed back to you giving details of scores, competitors' results and players available on the transfer market.

More details on release dates and league times as they emerge. *PC Home* will be fielding a team, so we'll see you on the cyber terraces.

Consumer news

Guide Kiyeko and his friends through the enchanting world of Amazonia

Kiyeko and the Lost Night

DEMO

NARRATED by Ben Kingsley, Kiyeko is a CD-Rom of the Interactive Storybook mould. Like the others in the genre, this first release from UBI Soft's new DigiTales range presents a simple series of colourful story-book screens which children aged four and over can explore and learn from.

Kiyeko is the young inhabitant of Amazonia, a beautiful land of paradise where the trees, flowers and birds sway in peaceful unison.

Unfortunately, the jungle is for-ever drenched in daylight and no one is able to sleep because night has disappeared.

Playing Kiyeko, young adventurers must work their way through the 12 *pages* of the storybook, unravelling the mystery and learning to read as they go.

Consumer news

Corel CD Office Companion

A HANDY little collection of home-business utilities found their way to the *PC Home* news desk this month. It's from Corel entitled the Corel CD Office Companion.

For £99 you receive Corel's Mosaic net browsing software, Business flowcharting from CorelFlow, a Personal Information Manager, a very American reference shelf of dictionaries, quotations and sports data and a substantial portion of Corel's clipart and TrueType Fonts. For more information phone 01491 873323.

Alpha Crystal Trackball

THE Alpha Crystal is a trackball with a difference. Its clear, plastic sphere glows red and then green when a button is pressed. Not solely a mystic's plaything, it can track at 1,100mm a second and has received much praise already from the many Amiga users for whom it was first designed.

It's compatible with all PC mouse types – just plug it into your serial port and spin, spin, spin. £39.95 from Golden Image on 0181-900 9291.

This is games editor Pete Hawley taking a corner at the recent IDG Karting Grand Prix. Honest!

Crammond drives F1GP2

GEOFF Crammond is beavering away as you read, putting the finishing touches to Formula One Grand Prix 2 which will be published by Microprose.

He's done quite a lot to improve the look of the cars. What you can't appreciate from the screen shot is Geoff's work on the game engine to increase both speed and realism.

All the original driving aids will be to hand and racing simulator fans with slower machines can drop off some of the graphical detail to keep the action flowing smoothly.

We're not sure how many of the new rules, regulations and track changes have been included, due to the drastic modifications in real-world Formula 1 over the last traumatic year for the sport.

But rest assured that it's set to be another racing classic.

Support worries

AS the on-sale dates for Sega and Sony's super-consoles approach, big players in the software industry are already starting to pull resources from the PC and pump cash into new projects for the next generation of dedicated gaming machines.

Major UK PC-game publishers are also forward planning releases for the console market. Bullfrog's Peter Molyneux says: "We are already working on the fastest, smoothest, most wonderful version of Magic Carpet for the Sony machine".

Psygnosis, who are now owned by Sony, have shown a great commitment to the growth of the PC CD-Rom market but are now heavily involved with game development on the PSX – to be launched in the UK in September.

IDC
INTERNATIONAL DATA CORPORATION

More than one third of the PCs purchased today are for home use. IDC surveyed approximately 4,000 households in Western Europe and found that a quarter currently own a PC and 9% are considering purchasing one within the next 12 months. Those who already own one were asked to explain what they actually *do* with their PCs whilst those *planning* to purchase one were asked to state their main reasons and motivation.

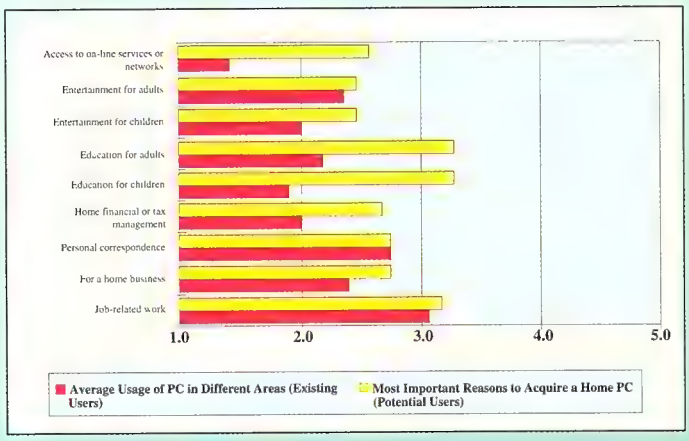
In the UK and France, IDC found that education for both adults and children was a primary motive for potential buyers. They emphasised the importance of owning a PC to complete schoolwork, college work and distance learning such as Open University degrees and post graduate MBA courses. On the other hand, IDC also found that *current* owners use their PCs primarily for job-related work and personal correspondence.

In Germany, those PC owners who participated in the survey placed the use of a PC for job-related work at the top of the list. In addition, those planning to purchase a PC stated that it was their primary motive* for wanting one and also stated that the use of a PC for post graduate education was a high priority whereas it ranked lower amongst owners. Both groups, however, expressed it's importance for personal correspondence.

Less widespread throughout Western Europe is the use of PCs to run a home business.

Usage Trends

Average Usage of PC in Different Areas Versus Most Important Reasons to Acquire a Home PC (Potential Users) – Western Europe



Modem/On-line Usage

Those surveyed revealed that the potentially vital area of on-line communication presently receives little usage amongst home PC owners because of its infancy. As a result, receiving and sending faxes is currently the main function of the modem amongst home users – particularly in Germany.

Accessing bulletin boards scored higher than most applications. In Western Europe, home shopping, network game playing and access to public networks such as CompuServe and the Internet haven't yet reached US levels, although within Western Europe, slightly more interest was shown in home banking. In France modem/on-line usage is somewhat higher because Minitel has successfully swept the nation. The UK has the highest instance of accessing employers' computers because of the relatively large number of teleworkers.

** Home Computing in Western Europe – A User Perspective. Price £3,000. Published by IDC UK Ltd., 2 Bath Road, London W4 1LN. Telephone: 0181 995 8082; Fax: 0181 995 2172. Contact Terry Ernest-Jones for further details.*

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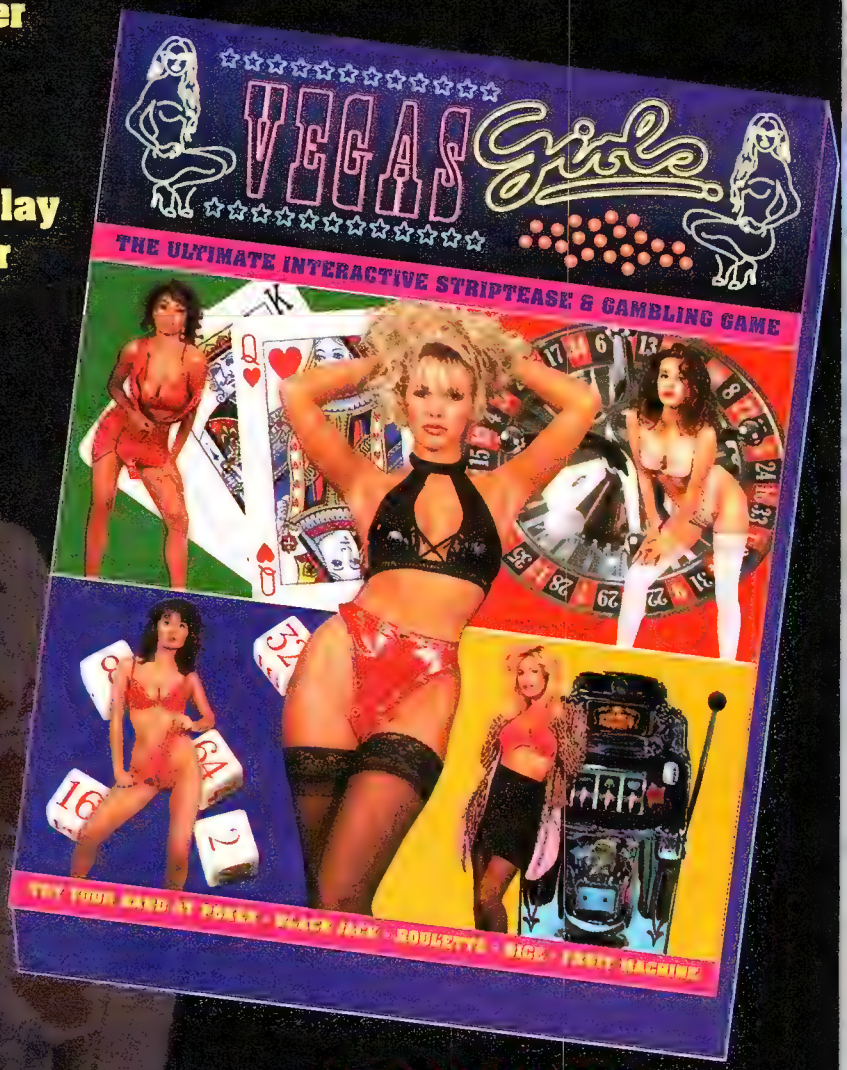

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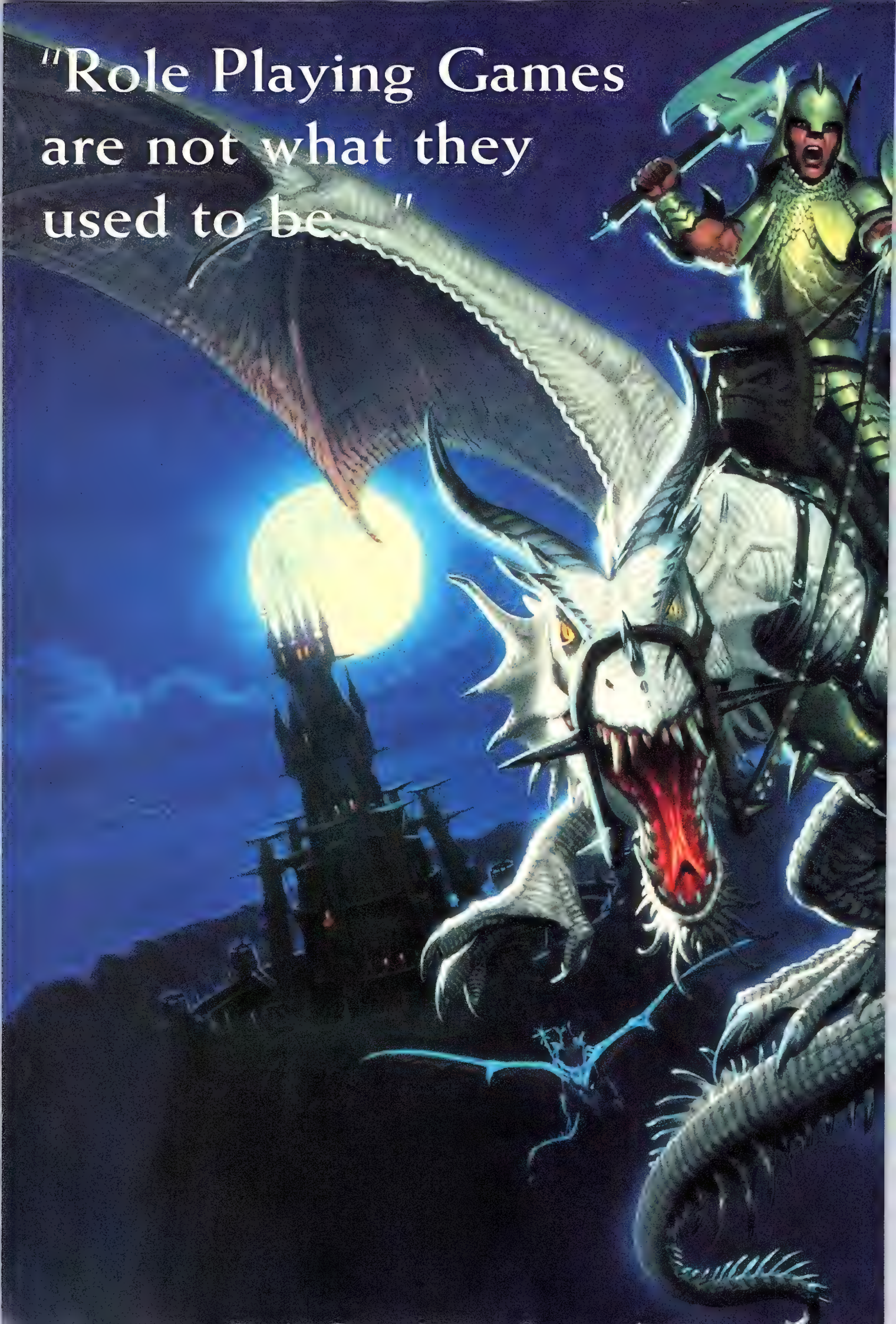
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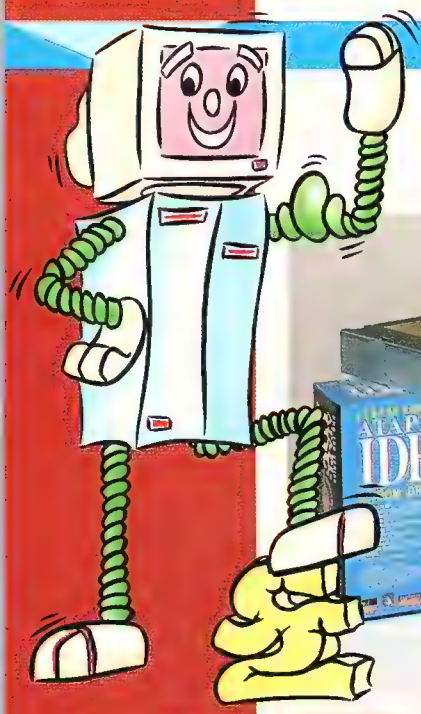

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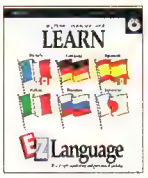

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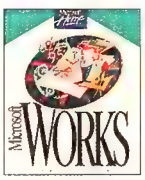

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CD showcase

Andy Shaw has the privilege of rooting through this month's bag of CD-Roms

Eyewitness Encyclopedia of Nature

YOU can more or less guarantee that a Dorling Kindersley product is going to be hot stuff – they've not been long in the CD-Rom market but the impression they've made so far is nothing short of spectacular.

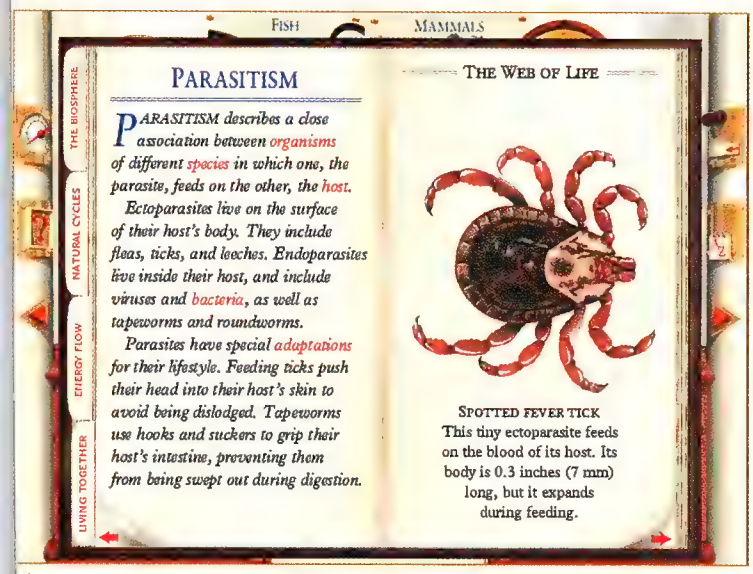
With a background in illustrative book design, they've taken their books and enhanced them on to CD-Rom, allowing the distinctive Dorling Kindersley multimedia design to remain true to the corporate style while creating an experience that is far more interactive than a book can ever be.

The Encyclopedia of Nature is an excellent example of this. Once the software is installed – a simple and painless process – you are faced with an excellent initial interface which is crammed with hot-spots to get you straight into finding the information.

In a sense it's a bit like a pictorial contents page where you can look in trays to find specimens of animals, click on a globe complete with climate indicator to search by location, or select one of a number of special features such as the fish and mammals posters, the microscope or the fossil.

The more boring but potentially useful tools like the A-Z index are tucked away to the sides of the screen.

The emphasis is really on learning by browsing rather than having a definitive wealth of information on every subject in the natural world. The information provides an excellent starting position for further research and is very beautifully presented.



Clicking on the red words in the text will take you to detailed explanations

It works too. Browsing is a joyous experience, both fascinating and compulsive. Almost every page features spoken text and either an excellent diagram, animation or video clip. There are also hypertext links to definitions of potentially tricky words.

The subject matter of this particular encyclopaedia is particularly strong.

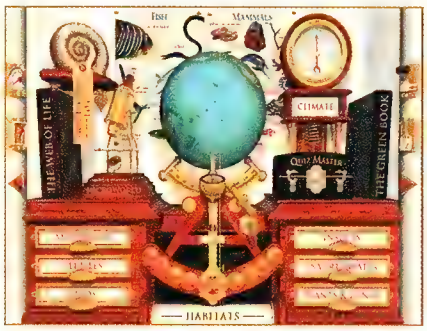
There is loads of information on many aspects of nature, though the animal kingdom is by far the most dominant.

There are also sections on plants, fungi, green issues and climatic regions. Basically it's all here – off the top of my head I couldn't think of any other topics that I would want to see in there.

Because of this broad nature, it does mean that some areas are skimped over a little.

Only the very basics of each topic are in here, in order to make room for the breadth and the stunning interface.

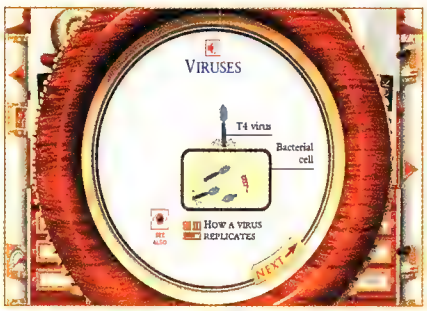
However, if this is enough to launch a young researcher into more specific literature on a subject – and there is certainly enough of interest that is well worth looking into further – I think the folk at Dorling Kindersley would probably consider it a job well done.



This is the main screen from where you can access all the natural information available

As with many encyclopaedic products aimed at youngsters around at the moment, there's also a quiz which uses information from the various topics it covers to set a series of questions.

This is an ideal way of gauging whether or not you're actually learning anything from the process of browsing around.



There are animations for different aspects of nature such as how these nasty viruses work

The fact that you hear, see and read everything means information can be taken in very easily, much better than reading a book.

The questions aren't particularly demanding – most adults will probably get most of the questions right with their second attempt at the three multiple-choice possibilities. For younger readers though, it is a good test that they are understanding what they are watching and is presented in a fun manner.

Dorling Kindersley are at the cutting edge of multimedia at the moment and the Encyclopedia of Nature only reinforces their supremacy.

profile

Product	Eyewitness Encyclopedia of Nature
Price	£59
Format	CD-Rom
Supplier	Dorling Kindersley
Tel	0171-836 5411

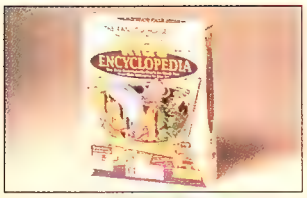
Summary

A superbly presented family reference work that doesn't dig too deep but covers a wealth of subjects

8

RIDGEWAY EDUCATIONAL

MULTIMEDIA CD-ROMS



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The images in the background of the main screen correspond to the time zone you are exploring

History of the World looks at many aspects of humanity from language to technology

Eyewitness History of the World

THE other new Dorling Kindersley reference work out this month is the Eyewitness History of the World, an anthropological look through time from the birth of man right through to the modern age.

Being in the Eyewitness series, this is presented in a similar manner to the Encyclopedia of Nature and the other CD-Roms in the set, and it's full of interesting information about the progression of humankind from the first hairy Neanderthals right through to the hairy dictator of the Gulf War. Not a lot has changed really when you think about it.

Eight different time zones can be explored including the Ancient World, the Classical World, the Age of Explorers and such like. The main title screen changes depending on which area of time you are navigating.

There is a globe in the centre so you can search the history by location which stays the same through all the time zones. The surrounding area changes, however, with museum type exhibits providing hot-links to specific areas of interest.

For example in the Classical World period, the exhibits include a Roman centurion's helmet, a Greek battleship and a few other bits and pieces of pottery and metal. Each will take you to areas of relevance when you click on it.

There are other areas to the main screen such as a document tray, where you will find relevant works from the time, a whole set of books including a Who's Who and the Quiz Master for testing subject matter just consumed.

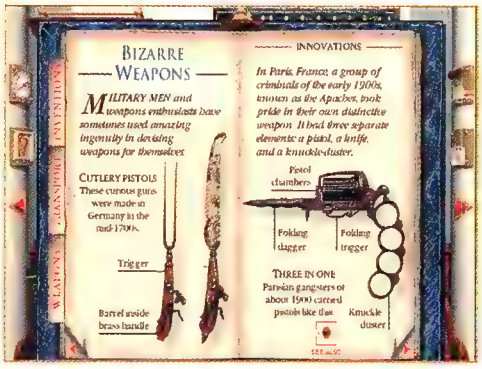
As with all the Eyewitness products, the text is enriched with beautiful illustrations, speech, animations, maps and snippets of video. Also throughout the documents highlighted red words will link to other pages or the glossary, explaining the meaning of some of the more tricky, long words.

A problem with all the Eyewitness titles is that they don't go particularly deep because of the amount of information they try to cover in each piece. There are often times when you can't help but wish that some of the pages had gone into more detail about what they are exploring.

They really can't be used on their own to give enough information to do anything with, but as a launch pad for further study for children around the age of 10, they are ideal.

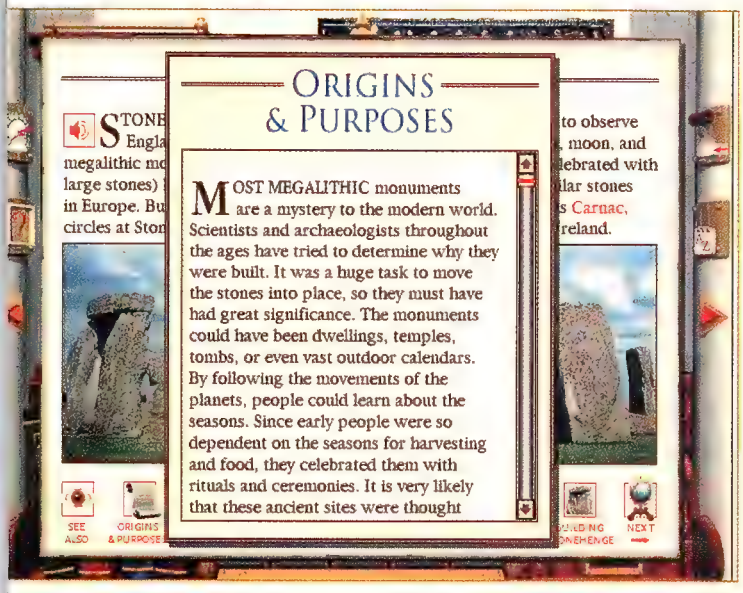
This package really is a visual and aural feast. An inquisitive child of any age should be able to spend hours browsing through it, and I think mum and dad will occasionally find plenty of interest in there also.

If you have young children showing an interest in human history, you couldn't find a much better way of helping them discover it for themselves short of buying a time machine.



A number of extra books can be read like the Who's Who plus this volume on innovations

Some of the more modern sections have video clips that link with important happenings



On all pages icons will lead you on to further information

profile

Product	Eyewitness History of the World
Price	£59
Format	CD-Rom
Supplier	Dorling Kindersley
Tel	0171-836 5411

SUMMARY

Excellently presented multimedia package on a highly interesting subject

9

CD showcase

Atomic Age

ONE of the most influential technological developments of this century was the atomic bomb. Not only was it an amazing scientific leap, it also threw up a whole host of ethical questions about science, the role of the military in technological development and the autonomy of science's responsibility to society.

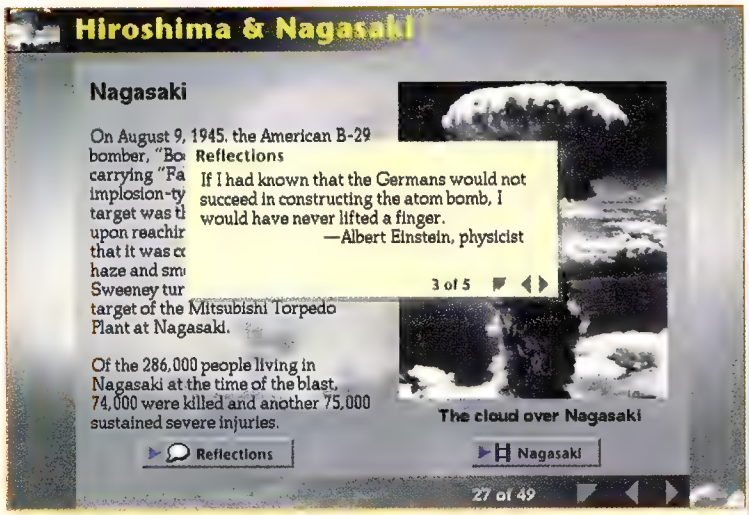
This CD-Rom takes the history and consequences of atomic power, mainly referring to its use as a weapon of destruction, and gives the interactive viewer all the facts without really making any judgements. This is quite a nice way of portraying the information because the subject is so contentious.

Predictably enough, the CD-Rom uses all the usual multimedia tricks to say its piece, including some great items of old news footage of US soldiers putting on dark goggles in order to protect their eyes from the test nuclear explosions that the government stuck them in front of.

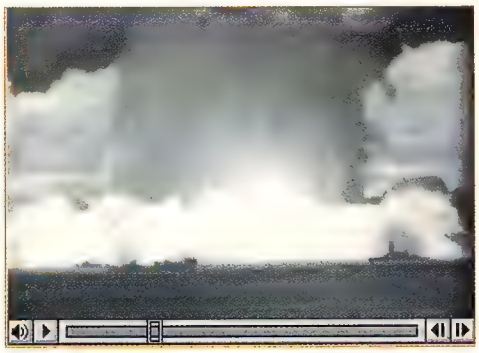
Even more horrific are the pictures of burnt flesh resulting from the bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. There is a superb news reel of a bomb going off behind some Japanese battleships which really shows the scale of those mushroom clouds.

As well as this there are animations, discussions about the technology and the hardware that carries it into battle, and quotes and snippets from some of the key characters of the time. This is all balanced into the general information so that you don't overdose on video and animation before you learn anything.

This is a superb piece of well put together and deeply researched multimedia. It is informative with excellent presentation and is recommended to anyone with even a passing interest in the subject.



There are relevant quotes in various sections of the presentations, such as this from Einstein



Video clips of various explosions and tests give a real sense of scale

Atomic weapons and people don't mix, as demonstrated by this woman who luckily survived a blast

profile

Product	Atomic Age
Price	£19.99
Format	CD-Rom
Supplier	Softkey
Tel	0181-789 2000

Summary

An excellently presented multimedia extravaganza about the atomic bomb and its consequences. And a good price

9

Gus Goes to Cyberopolis

IF your children like cutesy American dogs that talk and sing folk songs, they should love Gus Goes to Cyberopolis. Unfortunately, you may also have to tie them up in a bin liner and throw them in the canal.

Yes, the product is very American. I'm sure that in the States this stuff goes down really well, but compared to, for example, the quality of Richard Scarry's interactive Busy Town this is just too much American rubbish for my tastes.

The game actually involves going to a number of locations in Cyberopolis, a six-location town, and rooting out Gus's CyberBuds – translation: *friends*. As well as this, in each location are activities – in the post office for example, you can write a letter to a friend using a template into which you can insert icon stamps. In the Science Dome you must guess whether objects are going to sink or float in water.

The characters are incredibly annoying – there was a feeble attempt to make them hip and happening which I don't think will wash with British children of any age. The fact that they sing nauseating country and western inspired folk songs to introduce the various locations while Moonwalking and break dancing doesn't work.

Frankly I can't really recommend this unless you really are utterly pro-American and want your children to grow up saying *swell* a lot. The general activities are mildly entertaining and will probably teach the youngsters something, while the game that links them all – trying to find the CyberBuds in each location – is an exercise in discovering things you really don't want to find because they are so annoying.

Guildsoft have literally just shipped the American product over here and with so much decent British edutainment software around I can't see the point in this.

There are six activity locations to visit, all of which are accessed from this screen

profile

Product	Gus Goes to Cyberopolis
Price	£29.95
Format	CD-Rom
Supplier	Guildsoft
Tel	01752 895100

Summary

The games aren't that interesting and the Americaness of the product does grate at times

3

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CD showcase

Wine Guide

IF you have any kind of interest whatsoever in wine, Microsoft's new CD-Rom reference work is aimed fairly and squarely in your direction.

Whether you want to know everything there is to know about various wines and where they come from, or are just interested in what is good to buy next time you're heading to the off-licence or supermarket, Wine Guide is there to help you.

Featuring video footage of TVs Oz Clarke throughout the entire guide, it has whole host of ways to retrieve information.

You can view it almost like an Oz Clarke TV show, and look through his advice on a wealth of subjects from opening a bottle and drinking it to his guided tour of the world's vine growing regions.

This latter part includes discussions on everything from how wine is grown to what kind of food it goes with.

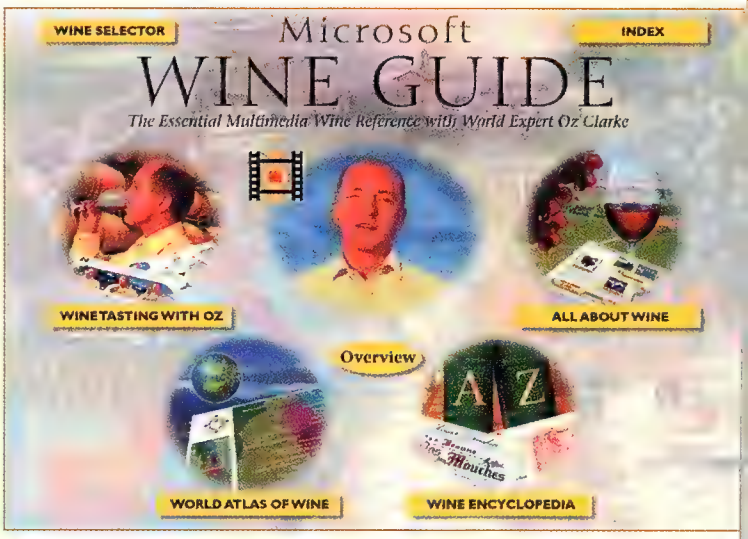
The most useful feature of the package is the database. This has nearly 6,000 types of wine which can be cross referenced through a number of different features like colour, region and even things like taste.

Once you have searched for wines that suit your personal criteria, you can make an easily updatable list which can also be printed out.

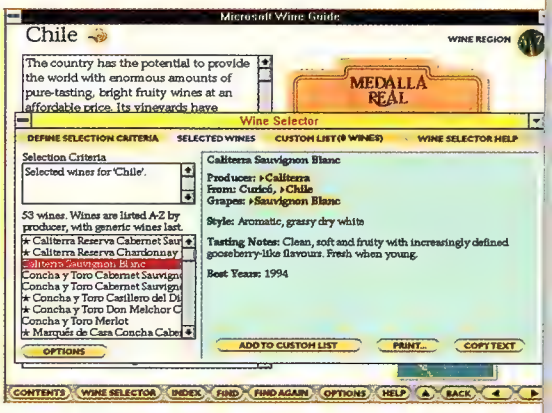
Wine Guide has a simple and easy to use interface so that nothing is ever more than a mouse click away, and what with Oz Clark's beaming face cheerily grinning out of his video window over everything you do, there is not really a much better way of sampling wine short of cracking open a bottle.

If you like wine and fancy experimenting a bit and moving away from your stereotypical £2.50 supermarket bottle, this is as good a place to start as any.

Even if you reckon you already know a thing or two, there should be something here to broaden your palette.



The Wine Guide – everything you need to know about wine



The entire database can be searched using a variety of criteria so you can make your own personalised wine guide

profile

Product	Wine Guide
Price	£40
Format	CD-Rom
Supplier	Microsoft
Tel	01734 270001

Plenty of well-presented information about hundreds of wines, including the opinion of an expert

7

Spider-Man Cartoon Maker

IF there is one comic super-hero who characterises Marvel comics it's Spider-Man. He's universally known, with probably almost as many spin-off movie, TV and merchandising tie-ins as the mighty Batman. Spidey's sharp one-line wit and not quite whiter-than-white quirks make him one of the best loved comic personalities ever.

Younger fans will now be overjoyed about the fact that they can create their own cartoons featuring their favourite super-hero using Random House's latest themed multimedia animation creation package.

There are loads of options and help, from nice big backdrops that have been pre-drawn to animated characters which move about as you use the mouse to transfer them around the screen. This latter option is fairly crude – there are no options to scale the characters once you've started to move them – so if you want Spider-Man or one of his enemies to move away, you get no sense of depth as they stay the same size.

Having said this, things could have the potential for getting extremely complicated if the Cartoon Maker went into this sort of depth. There is a lot to be said for simplicity, and as long as you obey certain rules, like always keeping characters in the foreground, a simple animation can be created in minutes.

The basic emphasis of this package is its story telling power. To encourage kids to be creative, it has plenty of merit as it features a character they know and the animation, although not great, is a useful tool to keep the interest level high enough to complete a project.

There is an intrinsic desire in this software to see exactly what the end product is going to be like and then

A stunning scene as Spidey captures that bloke having a go at a fireman

There are plenty of different pre-animated characters to choose from including loads of super-baddies

profile

Product	Spider-Man Cartoon Maker
Price	£29.99
Format	CD-Rom
Supplier	Random House
Tel	0171-973 9750

Fun to play with but won't produce the next Disney and is quite poor quality

5

Looking at Animals

PEOPLE tend to view animals in different ways. Some think they are lovely fluffy things that are friendly and loyal, while the rest think they're horrible creatures that make your eyes itch and eat expensive furniture.

Looking at Animals from Anglia Multimedia is definitely aimed squarely at the former type of person.

It is an interactive collection of art based around animals. Although this is really aimed at the classroom – there are worksheets in the package specifically designed to conform with stages in the National Curriculum – there are so many pictures in this collection that it would be of interest to anyone who likes their art to contain plenty of our furry friends.

The CD-Rom is themed in a number of ways so you can search the database by the name of the artist, the theme of the picture or even by the museum where you can find it. This feature is particularly nice, as you can look at the picture and then go to a local museum and see it in its full glory.

This really is more of a classroom tool, simply because of the way it has been set out, with loads of worksheets especially designed to get children to appreciate the pictures they are looking at and to use the CD-Rom constructively.

However, if you are particularly fond of animals, there is a wealth of artistic information which is specifically themed to tie in with this interest.

All the pictures are sorted into themes so they can be viewed in similar groups

Any of the pictures can be viewed full screen to be seen in all their glory

profile

Product	Looking at Animals
Price	£61.69
Format	CD-Rom
Supplier	Anglia Multimedia
Tel	01268 755811

Summary

A nicely presented CD-Rom that's really aimed at the classroom but will still appeal to the animal-loving art fan

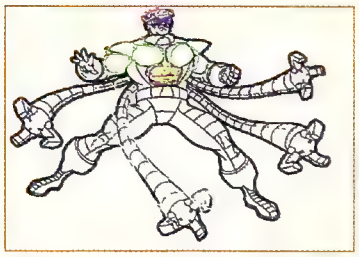
7

There are a few prepared animations, some with Stan Lee's approval

show the result to other people.

Non-comic loving parents can also breath easily that there is some versatility in the package. Other files such as Windows bitmaps can be incorporated into the animations, so there is no reason why a young story-teller should have to stick to super-heroes.

The multimedia creation engine is the same as has been used before in Magic Theatre. This means that actually creating cartoons is very simple but not particularly powerful – everything does end up looking like bad Monty Python animation and there is no real possibility for



If you can't draw, you can trace and colour in some outlines

interaction between characters.

It will probably allow kids to have plenty of fun creating their own simplistic cartoons. Adult fans will not, however, be able to use it to create their own feature length multimedia masterpieces.

The producers have managed to drag in Stan Lee's name and, a few story animations are scripted by Marvel's head cheese himself. It's nice to see this kind of endorsement as it implies that the creator of the character has seen the product and approves.

What better recommendation is there than that?

quick peeks

Castles

IF you have any kind of interest in British castles, everything you might wish to know is on this CD-Rom. From tours to what life was actually like for the people who lived there, this guide should provide enough information for even the most medievally illiterate to become experts on this particular brand of architecture.

Anglia Multimedia 01268 755811

The Industrial Revolution

DITTO this industrial revolution disc. Although it is probably more useful for schools, if you do need a resource that intensively profiles the rise of capitalism in England, there are plenty of documents, pictures and facts to discover in this multimedia exploration.

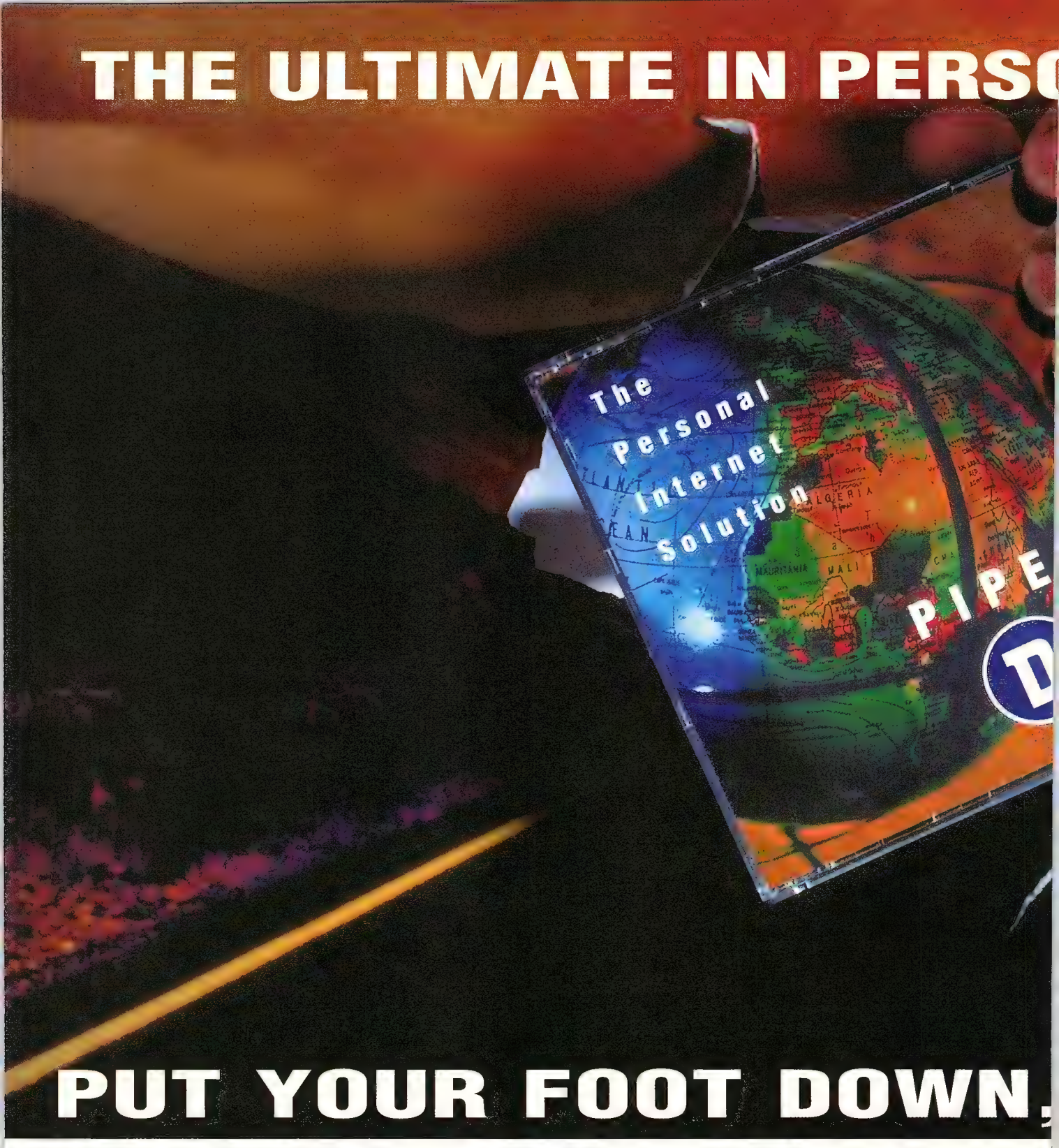
Anglia Multimedia 01268 755811

Digital Dreamware

RAVE music is one of those things that if you're young and hip you probably at least understand it even if you don't like it. This is a trippy interactive set of demos that will appeal to those who like rave music and lots of wavy colours.

Virgin 0181-960 2255

THE ULTIMATE IN PERSO



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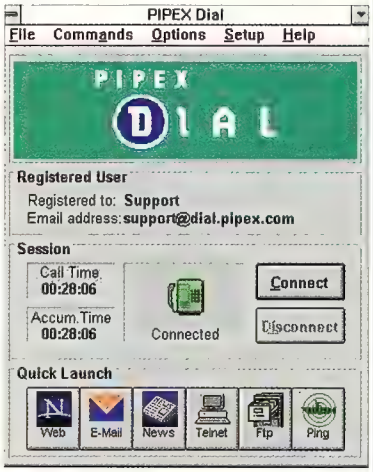

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Shareware scene

Andrew Wright trawls through the best in try-before-you-buy to find some new releases

Graphic Workshop for Windows
Fuzzy's Space Golf
Flying Colours 1.1
RottED

Terminal Velocity

YOU may have seen the full version of this flight sim/blast-'em-up reviewed in the July issue of *PC Home*. Well now you can go out and download the shareware version. It's a brand spanking new game from 3D Realms, an offshoot of the infamous Apogee, that puts you in the cockpit of a futuristic TV-202 space fighter.

The plot is simple – you are flying an advanced fighter to defend Earth against hordes of aliens that have broken a peace treaty and now appear intent on destroying Earth's population and its defences. Things aren't what they seem apparently and as the missions progress, you will learn more and more about what is happening.

The shareware version offers a single intense mission on a distant ice-bound planet to destroy some labs and power plants and then fly down into an underground plant and do still more damage.

There's plenty to stop you, including ground-based guns and enemy fliers of various types. Different weapons are on offer and you can resize the game window, change views, speed up and slow down, switch to long-range radar and even use an afterburner.

There are the usual head-to-head facilities on offer, including networked play and serial link, both with the same Remote Ridicule system employed in Rise of the Triads.

The texture-mapped landscapes are a real joy to fly through...

The minimum system with which you can play the game is a 486 with VGA graphics and 8Mb of ram. You might manage with 4Mb, according to the documents, but it sounds a struggle.

The recommended hardware is a DX2/66 with 8Mb of ram and a local bus video card. If you want to use the SVGA graphics at 640 x 480, you'll definitely need 8Mb. If you happen to have a Pentium equipped PC, you'll be able to choose even more detail although it has to be said that the game is perfectly acceptable on a decent 486 with the detail levels slightly reduced.

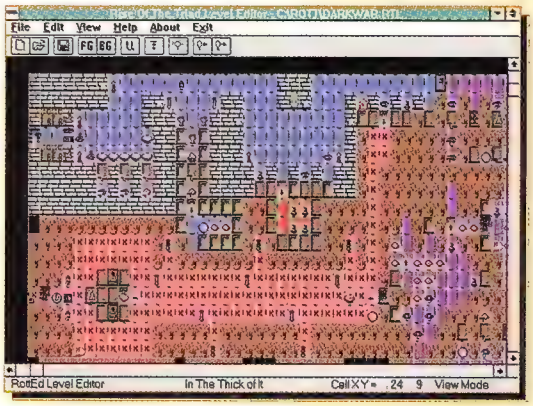
Sound cards supported include most SoundBlaster models, Pro Audio Spectrum 8 or 16 bit, Gravis Ultrasound and Aria.

Registration with the US authors - or Apogee in the UK – gets you six more planets, 18 more levels, 20 different enemies and better sound quality up to 44 kHz. You also get a manual and support for up to eight networked players.

The graphics are superb, the controls and other options highly configurable and the gameplay looks pretty impressive too.

I'd be very surprised if 3D Realms/Apogee haven't got another huge hit on their hands and it's nice to see them sticking to the shareware concept rather than taking the same route Id Software took with Doom II.

PD Selections
01474 325802
9



Build your own COMM-Bat levels with RottEd

RottEd

MANY believe Rise of the Triads is far better than Doom. Unfortunately there have been many more WADs and other add-ons for Doom than for the likes of Triad but I'm glad to see that a freeware level editor has arrived from the States.

It's a Windows program that should work happily on any PC capable of playing the game itself – in other words a 386 or better with at least 4Mb of ram. It's pretty quirky and the colours are garish but at least you can do the business on those impossible levels.

PDSoft
01702 466933
6

Fuzzy's Miniature Space Golf

Just pull back on the mouse a little and.... oops, missed again

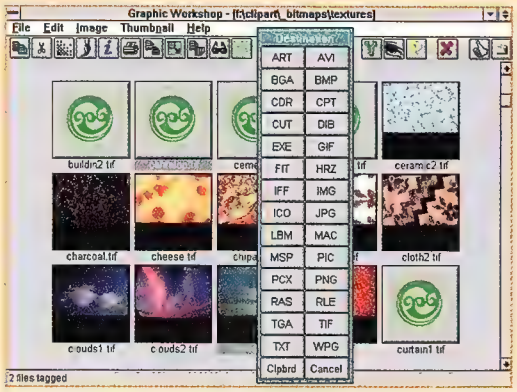
GOLF games on the PC are always popular but if you don't know your wedges from your birdies, you're going to be struggling. On the other hand, crazy golf has always been popular but if it conjures up images of wet weekends in Blackpool and a desperate search for something to amuse the kids, try Fuzzy's version for size.

This is a computer simulation of a crazy golf course. It's set in space but that makes little difference except to the background graphics as there's plenty of gravity to keep the ball moving in a straight line.

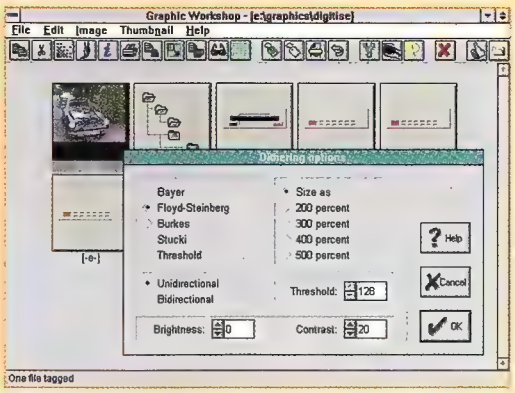
The graphics and sound effects are well done and the controls are nice and easy too, requiring only the mouse. This one should appeal to the youngsters but they might just need some help – I couldn't get past the first half dozen holes!

PD Selections
01474 325802
7

Graphics Workshop for Windows 1.1r



If GW can't convert it, the format hasn't been invented



Images can be dithered to black and white for printing

VERSION 1.1r is the latest version of the popular image conversion and manipulation program from Alchemy Mindworks. The biggest change is the addition of the iconic button bar to replace the text buttons in earlier versions and there's a balloon help facility too, in case the icons aren't too clear.

The other main changes are improved, faster JPEG handling and support for the new PNG (portable network graphics) standard. It is also Windows 95 compatible and even supports MPEG video if you happen to be running Windows 95 or another 32-bit version of Windows.

Although not as comprehensive as Paintshop Pro 2.0 which has a number of filters and special effects, or Paintshop Pro 3.0 with its editing tools, Graphic Workshop has an attractive user interface that makes browsing through file collections very easy indeed.

It will also crop, dither, scale, rotate and print images, view them very quickly, create good looking catalogues and thumbnails so you can look through the same folders at a later date.

Supported image formats include GIF, IFF/LBM, GEM/IMG, CUT, MacPaint, MSP, PIC, PCX, text files, TIFF, Targa, BMP/DIB, WPG, ART, JPEG, Kodak PhotoCD, RAS, FLI/FLC, WMF, Corel Draw CDR previews, QuickTime movies, MPEG, UUencoded files, ICO, and PNG. Pretty comprehensive, I'm sure you'll agree.

Goodman International
01782 335650
7

If you are unable to resolve a shareware-related problem with an Association of Shareware Professionals (ASP) member directly, write to:
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ASP Obudsman 700007,3536

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This collection includes a very good rendition of VGA Strip Poker, a great game where you try to 'pick up girls', several high-res Windows wallpaper files and a naughty screen saver for DOS which features some nice.... hmmmm. Adult - but this lot is suitable to show Grandma....perhaps!

THE VIRUS PACK £12.95
This collection includes the latest virus checkers from the McAfee stables, along with the memory resident version of F-Prot, a Windows version of the McAfee Scan program and also signature updates for the MicroSoft Antivirus program which ships with MicroSoft DOS ver 6.0 and higher.

THE WINDOWS COLLECTION £12.95
Includes programs to edit and create your own icons, a file containing thousands of pre-drawn icons, Windows tips and hints to help you get better performance from your system. Even includes an hilarious 'icon' which sits on your desktop and belches and insults you whenever it is 'clicked'.

WINDOWS GAME COLLECTION £12.95
Some of our most popular selling titles including Windows Mahjongg, Bridge for Windows, Canasta, Euchre, and a number of Windows Solitaire games. Even includes a couple of ultra fast-paced Windows arcade style games. This pack contains something for everyone! It even includes 'Battleships'!

FONT/CLIPART COLLECTION £12.95
Everybody wants to liven up their documents to give them a more professional feel and what better way to do it than with this collection of dozens of TrueType fonts for Windows 3.1 and literally dozens of top quality 300 dpi clipart drawings all in .PCX format. This pack is a DeskTop Publishers Dream.

THE GAMES COLLECTION £12.95
This pack features some of the **very latest** shareware games to be released on the market including 3D Cube,CargoBay, Funball, Gambit Chess, Isle Wars and more. Whether you are after shoot-em-up action or more serious thinking games - you'll find something to please here! Superb!

Special Notice to Readers:
Please note that all prices are **INCLUSIVE of VAT**. Use of the software requires a minimum of a 386 computer and a VGA screen. A mouse is recommended and Windows 3.1 or higher is required for all Windows shareware listed. We only ship orders on high density diskettes so please be sure to specify 3.5inch or 5.25inch diskettes when completing your order. Please ring if you need assistance.

Select any **SIX** programs from this or the next column and pay only £12.95 for all six programs. As a special bonus offer - choose **ALL** files in these two columns and pay only £24.95. This represents superb buying!

3D PITFALL
This is one 'hot' Tetris hybrid for all those Tetris junkies out there! Instead of the conventional 2D approach - this variation looks 'down' on the playing surface from above. Drop pieces from above to eliminate rows of blocks. Very addictive - but incredibly difficult. This is one of my favourites!

HERB POWER ver 2.0
The ultimate guide to the power of herbs. This spectacular, colourful, and user friendly program will teach you what you need to know about natures medicines and how they affect your life. Includes a full description of each herb, cultivation, cooking, medicinal usage, latest medical findings etc. Tops!

DESKJET SURVIVAL KIT
HP InkJet utility. Includes a number of utility files including: print 8 pages of ASCII text on one page (reducing your ink usage); TSR 'ESC' code control panel; TSR address grabber for printing envelopes and more. Special bonus included advising on the best way to refill your ink cartridges. Excellent.

FREE!
All orders received **BEFORE** 30 Sept 1995 will receive a **FREE** copy of a **HOT** new 'mystery' file. Get yours **NOW!**

PC CONFIG ver 7.27
Detects all hardware in your PC and displays it on the screen. One of the best 'system info' programs around. Also includes CD ROM benchmark routines. Find local bus and PCI boards, CyRix, IT, UMC, and Pentium CPU's; detects lots of VGA chips, APM functions, EPP BIOS and lots of other things that I don't understand. A great utility to add to your 'kit'!

VGA STRIP POKER
Here's your chance to try your hand against a couple of very attractive young ladies. But be careful - depsite their female 'charms' they play a real mean game of Poker - so be prepared for a beating. Harmless entertainment suitable for all ages.

CAPTURE IT! FOR WINDOWS
Capture Professional allows you to capture, touch up, and save screens within Windows 3.1. Files can be saved in a variety of formats including .BMP, .EPS, .GIF, .ICO, .JPG, .PCX, .TIF and .TGA. Great for including 'screen shots' in your documents.

TIME CHASER FOR WINDOWS
One of the best Personal Information Managers (PIM) and Client Tracker programs released for ages. The main screen is an open diary - from which you can call up appointments, schedule meetings, reference phone lists (personal and business). This is an electronic office all in one file. Easy to use.

MY FAMILY RECORD
A new-comer to the family of genealogy software - My Family Record stores information in the standard PAF format - making it compatible with other genealogy programs. Very simple to use as well!

2MB DISKETTE CREATOR
What a nifty little program! Enables you to format a 1.44MB diskette to over 1.8MB PERFECTLY SAFELY. A small TSR program loads to enable you to get the extra capacity - but still enabling you to read and write existing 1.44MB and 720KB disks!

INTEGRITY MASTER
An anti-virus program that does a great deal more than just detect and kill viruses. Integrity Master is constantly checking your system looking for hardware glitches and software bugs. Will report suspected problems to you so that you can do something about them before it is too late. A real MUST HAVE!

MACHINE NATION
Machine Nation is a vertical shoot-em-up arcade style game. It has smooth parallax scrolling and nice graphics. If you love games where you can shoot anything that moves - you'll love Machine Nation.

LASER LIGHT
The most addictive 'puzzle' game I have come across this year! Great music and graphics. You must use mirrors and beam splitters to hit various targets - but deciding where to place the 'splitters' is truly a work-of-art. A real challenge for even the most seasoned puzzlers! This one will keep you up all night!

RUMMY 500
An excellent Windows 3.1 rendition of the classic Gin Rummy card game - but with a few twists. You can pick up as many discards as you like as long as you can 'lay' some down. Excellent graphics.

SEXY WALLPAPER FOR WINDOWS
Some very attractive guys and girls all in .BMP format - and scanned at high resolution for use as Windows wallpaper. Sexy but tasteful too!

FLOPPY DRIVE KIT
A collection of 'floppy drive' utilities which will perform the following tasks: speed up drive operation; test drive for proper operation; determine optimal skewing; check for drive rotation speed; display a disks formatting parameters and more. I found the 'speed up' feature increased my floppy's speed by 6%!

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Please note that shareware programs require seperate payment to the author if found useful. Please ring us if you are unfamiliar with the concept!

Write home

Duncan Evans holds court in the pages you write yourselves

outraged

I FEEL I must write and complain about the service of one of your advertisers. The firm concerned – Multimedia – have a full page advert in your magazine and I am disgusted at the disgraceful attitude they show to their customers.

I bought a CD-Rom drive from them in East Horsley, Surrey in August 1994. I telephoned them in March '95 when the drive did not work properly. The fault was that it made a noise all the time and it appeared that the lens seemed to be in the wrong place.

After I had spoken to them and been given a Returns No, I asked if they had received it. The answer was yes. I left it another week and enquired whether or not they could repair it. I was told that they could not repair it and that it would have to be returned to the manufacturer and would take six weeks.

I was about to phone them after six weeks when I received a letter. I phoned and spoke to the manager who informed me that although the manufacturer's warranty was for three years, his was only six months.

I reminded him of the Sale of Goods Act but he said it was not his problem. I then decided to ring a number in Germany which was listed inside the cover of the Operators Manual for Technical Support and was informed of the UK number to phone which I did.

I was told that if I left my name and phone number I would be contacted shortly about my problem. After about an hour I had a call from the USA from a really helpful gentleman called Jeff who advised me after I had explained the mechanical problem that a replacement would be sent and would I return the drive to Media Vision in Germany. I then phoned Multimedia and explained what had happened and that I had basically done what they should have done.

The manager got abusive and hung up on me. I redialled his number and was told if I sent a cheque for £10 they would post my drive back to me. After I had read out the bit from his last letter stating it would cost £5.95 to return it to me, he agreed on that price.

I would be grateful if you could advise them of their legal responsibility to customers. Even if they were supplied by a wholesaler it still reflects badly upon your good selves that you do not care about your readers or the potential customers of your advertisers. – *N.J.Cheesman, Kent*

Part of your problem was that Media Vision were in financial trouble at the time and could have left the supplier high and dry. As there was a manufacturers' three-year warranty, the supplier's 6 month warranty was an extra level of support.

Your only other real complaint is that you were going to be charged £10 to return the out-of-warranty equipment whereas they had quoted £5.95, and when you pointed this out the manager agreed to the lower price.

The six week turnaround is common for equipment sent overseas because two of those weeks are the time taken for postage there and back.

mah jong found

IN the Write Home column of the May/June issue of *PC Home*, one of your readers was enquiring about a Mah Jong game.

The only one I know which fits the bill is Hong Kong Mah Jong Pro published by Electronic Arts, PO Box 7578, San Mateo CA 94403-75778.

It is the full game with a choice of different partners with varying skill levels, and I have been using it for months quite happily. I got it as part of a bundle with the SoundBlaster 16 CD-Rom kit, so Creative Labs in this country might be able to help. – *Mike McWilliams, London*

buyers' guide

RIGHT that does it. Your reply to Wayne Broadhurst in the May/June issue of *PC Home* is typical of the attitude the PC industry has towards OS/2.

I have only used this operating system twice, but then again, I rarely use Windows. I spend most of my time in Dos, but I must speak up against the bad publicity Warp has been getting.

Why is it that when Windows hangs, it is blamed on the applications, but when OS/2 goes down, it takes the flak. Often the fault lies with Windows – ever tried running a Dos Window recently?

People do not give OS/2 credit where it is due. Dos sessions sending the system down in Windows is considered acceptable, but from what I have seen of it, OS/2 imitates Windows much better despite the fact that this is a much more complicated environment to emulate.

Resentment of Microsoft seems to be growing in the PC industry, but we will never damage the company if we blindly recommend and buy products that are flawed and not up to the competition. – *A. Smallshaw, Lancs*

So you spend most of your time in Dos, have only used Warp twice and think it's getting a bum rap?

treasure trove

Want to win a Mesh Pentium? Turn to page 58

Write home

expandability

FIRSTLY I have a question about OS/2. Before November last year I was an Amiga user and when I decided to upgrade my computer, I looked at all computer formats available, giving all a chance to give me value for money, expandability, choice of software and so on.

You can guess by my writing to you that I settled for a PC. My system is a Packard Bell 486SX2-50 with 8Mb ram, SVGA monitor, SB 16 Value sound card and Creative double-speed CD-Rom drive.

When I decided on a PC, I bought *PC Magazine* (October 94) to help me decide which one to buy with the money I had available at the time. On the front of the magazine was a CD with OS/2 on it.

As I didn't even have a machine, never mind a CD-Rom drive at the time I put the CD in a drawer and forgot about it.

When I upgraded my PC to multimedia my problems started. First was a lack of base memory which I have solved by using multi config.sys and autoexec.bats.

After a lot of messing about I now have a maximum 579,328 bytes of base memory.

It was then that I remembered the OS/2 CD that I had tucked away. This would solve my memory problems. I got the magazine and started to read the article on OS/2.

The article states that OS/2 occupies no more than 6Mb of ram, is this true? If it is , how come the article doesn't state that systems with only 4Mb cannot use it? Also, how will it affect the running of my games software, which mostly require at least 4Mb of either EMS or XMS or a mixture of both? Will this mean that I will have to buy another memory upgrade?

If the answer to my first question is true, is OS/2 Warp the same? My third question is: Will Windows 95 (or is it 96) be the same?

I'm also looking for a good paint package. My Amiga came with DPaint 4 which is a brilliant piece of software. I can't find a decent paint package for the PC that doesn't cost a fortune. What makes things even worse is, D Paint 4 comes free with the machine. You must admit PaintBrush is rather dull. – *Steve Tomlinson, Lincoln*

Firstly you'll need 6Mb ram or more to be able to use Warp, but then you will be able to run those 4Mb games. That said, an upgrade to 8Mb is a much better idea, and as we showed in our Thanks for the Memory *feature in the July issue of* PC Home *it's fairly easy to upgrade. We would advise all our readers to upgrade to 8Mb of ram.*

Next, the cover disc you have is of OS/2 Warp, and yes, we believe Windows 95 will be considerably better. In fact, you can read about the latest on Windows 95 on page 134.

While Microsoft are insisting that it will work on a 386 with 4Mb of ram, we're not so sure. The Beta versions still aren't fast even on a Pentium with 8Mb of ram, and we would heartily recommend only installing on a 8Mb PC when it is released.

Finally, I can recommend PC Paintbrush by Zsoft, available through SoftKey on 0181-789 2000, which is a cheap Windows package.

It's not the same as Windows Paintbrush, offering such treats as natural media painting. Apart from the animation side of DPaint 4, Zsoft Paintbrush for Windows is considerably better.

There's no doubting that Warp has many good points but it also is more unstable than Windows 3.1x and native application support is laughable compared to Windows.

However, the point you make about Microsoft is a sound one, and if we find any of their products fail to measure up then we will criticise them for it. In last month's issue of PC Home, *the latest CD release in the Home range scored 3/10!*

home free?

FIRSTLY may I say how much I enjoy your magazine. I find it very informative for home leisure use and general interest in the latest news. It's the best computer magazine I have come across.

Now my problem. I don't know if I am being thick but there is something I can't understand.

For some time now I have been buying the issue with the free CD. From what I understand of the word free, it means that I am not required to pay for it but need to do something to get the free gift – buy your magazine at £4.95.

So far so good. While I was in the newsagents I was looking at the issue with the free HD disk. It appeared to be the exact same magazine with the only printing difference being the red portion in the top left hand corner and the cost at £3.95.

Surely the cost of printing the magazine should be the same and if both issues have a free gift, the finished articles should cost the same.

Please explain why we are paying £1 for a free gift. I am sure there must be a simple explanation. – *Bob Slater, Stockport*

Of course the disks and the CD itself are a free gift with the magazine. The reason for the price difference is not a case of it being £1 more for the CD, the cost of the magazine is £4.95.

It's more a case of because the HD buyers are getting fewer programs we discount the cover price to give them a better deal. So, it's £1 off for the HD buyers, rather than £1 on for the CD users.

In any case, a fiver is outstanding value for money for a large full colour magazine dedicated to the home PC user, when it comes with a free CD containing programs, articles, videos and demos, which we try to tie in with the editorial in that month's issue. ■

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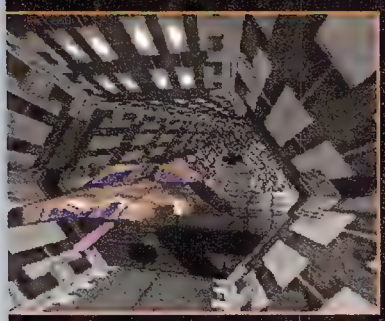

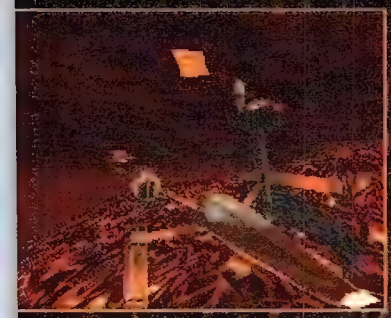

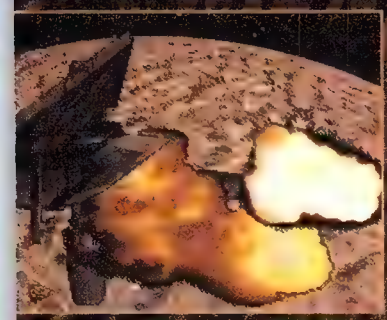

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Note: The shareware version of **Terminal Velocity** is a subset of the full game and contains only 3 of the planets. The shareware CD-ROM version does include cinematics.

Available on IBM/PC and CD-ROM shareware from end June 1995.
Available on IBM/PC and CD-ROM full version from early July 1995.

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treasure trove 58

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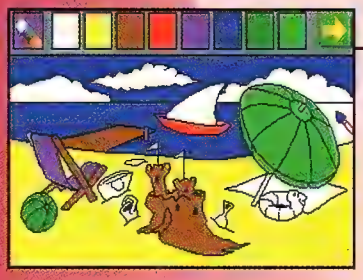
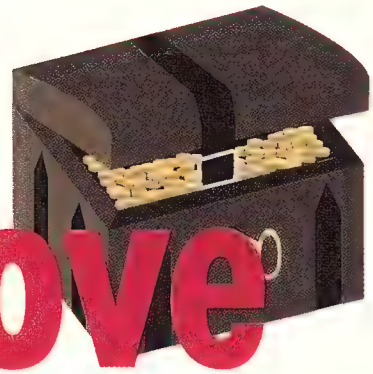
Kerry Culbert scans a range of packages to help keep talented children occupied



high street blues 81

Have the big retailers the knowledge to sell you what you need? We find out

Treasure trove



LAST month we gave you the opportunity to enter our £30,000 Treasure Trove Competition in which you had the chance to win one of over 1,400 fabulous prizes.

Due to the overwhelming response we're extending it.

The lucky first prize winner will receive a Mesh Pentium PC worth over £1,400.

This superb piece of hardware has a P-5 75MHz processor, 8Mb ram, and a quad speed CD-Rom drive. If this isn't Windows 95 ready we don't know what is.

A Pentium 75MHz processor will cope with any application or game you care to throw at it, and with 8Mb of ram you know you'll be able to run every piece of software you like.

And with a quad-speed CD drive it will make multimedia that bit more enjoyable, and video playing straight from a CD will come off smoothly with no break up or juddering. If you win the Mesh Pentium you'll be the envy of everyone in your street.

Mesh have also thrown in a fully configured fax/modem card with free CompuServe membership pack so you can get on-line and join the net surfing revolution. Plus there are 15 incredible top CD titles including the superb Encarta, MS Works and Dangerous Creatures. That's over £600 of CDs alone!

To be in with a chance of winning this excellent machine or one of the other 1,400 prizes, simply fill out the form on the opposite page and post it to us at *PC Home*, to arrive no later than August 20.

A big thanks to Mesh and all the companies who have supplied the brilliant prizes.

Massive £30,000 Compo

1st prize

and there's more – just look at these great prizes

THE second prize is a Minolta laser printer. This their SP1500 Winlaser 3000 DPI model that retails at nearly £1,000 and features PostScript emulation. It outputs at 6ppm and has 2Mb of onboard ram upgradable to 6Mb.

2nd prize

MINOLTA

MICROPROSE

There's also a bumper software bundle from Microprose who have kindly donated 20 CD games, 50 T-Shirts, 10 mugs, eight caps and two really cool baseball jackets.

Lots of other marvellous goodies can be won – see the panel on the right for full details of who has donated what.

10/10 Software	*Early Essentials: 3-7 (20), Junior Essentials: 5-11 (20)*
Centregold Multimedia	*CD-Rom Interactive Collection Volume 1 (20)*
Core Design	*Big Red Adventure (30)*
DataBecker	*Soft Collections' Work Faster With Floppies (300)*
Dorling Kindersley	*Eyewitness History of the World (10), Eyewitness Encyclopedia of Nature (10)*
Golden Image	*Wrist pads (300)*
GSP	*Pressworks Powerpack (2), Star collection (15)*
Impact Software	*Stereoworld on CD (30)*
Intuit	*Quicken 4 for Windows (20), QuickTax Return 1995 (20)*
Kixx XL	*The Secret of Monkey Island, Loom, Secret Weapons of the Luftwaffe (17)*
Merit Studios (Europe)	*Fighter Wing CD (10), Pro Hockey 95 CD (15)*
Micrografx	*ABC FlowCharter 4.0 (3), Designer Power Pack (3)*
Sierra-On-Line	*Alien Legacy (10), Aces Collection (5), Last Dynasty (5), Space Quest VI (5)*
Usersoft	*Quizamid (100)*
Microprose	*Falcon Gold CD (5), Transport Tycoon CD (5), Pizza Tycoon CD (5), Colonization CD (5), T-shirts (50), mugs (10), Caps (8), jackets worth £70 (2)*
Orchid	*SoundDrive 16 EZ cards (12)*
Serif	*The Desktop Publishing Suite CD (5)*

ENTRY FORM

Q: Which of these are you interested in?

HARDWARE

- ❑ speakers
- ❑ laser printer
- ❑ MPEG card
- ❑ video display card
- ❑ CD-Rom drive
- ❑ modems
- ❑ sound card
- ❑ extra memory
- ❑ control device
- ❑ inkjet printer
- ❑ video grabber card
- ❑ adding an extra hard drive
- ❑ upgrading your processor
- ❑ buying a new PC altogether

SOFTWARE

- ❑ education 3-11
- ❑ education 11-16
- ❑ adult education
- ❑ image processing
- ❑ painting
- ❑ drawing
- ❑ animation
- ❑ rendering
- ❑ journey planning
- ❑ genealogy
- ❑ hobbies
- ❑ sequencing
- ❑ Midi
- ❑ CompuServe & the Internet
- ❑ adventure games
- ❑ action games
- ❑ flight simulator games
- ❑ sports games
- ❑ other (please give details)...

. . . . . .

❑ *Tick this box if you don't want to be sent details of new products*

What hardware or software do you intend to buy over the next year?

. . . . . .

. . . . . .

Tie-breaker question: Who invented the computer?

- ❑ a. *PC Home*'s Editor, Duncan Evans
- ❑ b. That Babbage bloke
- ❑ c. A meat and potato pastie
- ❑ d. That Eddison chap

Rules and regulations are available upon request.
Closing date is August 20 and the Editor's decision is final

Name . . . . . .

Address . . . . . .

. . . . . .

Postcode . . . . . Tel . . . . . .

Age . . . . . Occupation . . . . . .

Number of children in household . . . . . .

PC owned (brand/CPU/ram) . . . . . .

. . . . . .

SEND ENTRIES TO: *PC Home* Treasure Trove, IDG Media, Media House, Adlington Park, Macclesfield, Cheshire SK10 4NP

The story tellers

A new batch of budget priced talking books are among the titles under Wilf Rees's educational microscope

AS I reported last month, the latest move from many of our educational software houses is to broaden their product range by offering collections of titles at the budget end of the market. As if by cue, several book titles have appeared and I have picked out three for your attention.

We have to ask first, of course, what is the point of producing a book on disk or CD-Rom? You might argue that the same spoken text could equally be produced on audio tape, with supporting notes to complement the contents.

The answer is quite simple: Once the extent of interactive analysis and explanatory content is experienced, CD-Rom products offer, in an unrivalled way, capabilities for seeking explanations to vague references, language or contexts, as well as supportive facilities to view images and video.

Add to this the capability to annotate sections of text and customise the presentation, and we have an outstanding learning and revision tool, ideally suited for examination or general contexts.

What we do not have, and let's be perfectly clear, is a replacement for a good book, a hot beach, a good bottle of wine, a comfortable lounger, and not a lap-top in sight!

The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn
The Adventures of Tom Sawyer

THESE two titles from Guildsoft have emerged to bring the works of Mark Twain into the multimedia marketplace. Not that there is anything innovative about this format: Bookworm Libraries are an American company who already have a portfolio listing over 15 titles.

What is particularly useful is the broadening of the database to encompass more modern authors, complementing the existing titles based mostly around the traditional works of Shakespeare or Chaucer.

Both titles have an identical format, utilising a disk-based platform to launch each of the CD-Rom titles. For the purposes of this review, I only intend to look at one of the titles, but assure you that identical facilities appear in both.

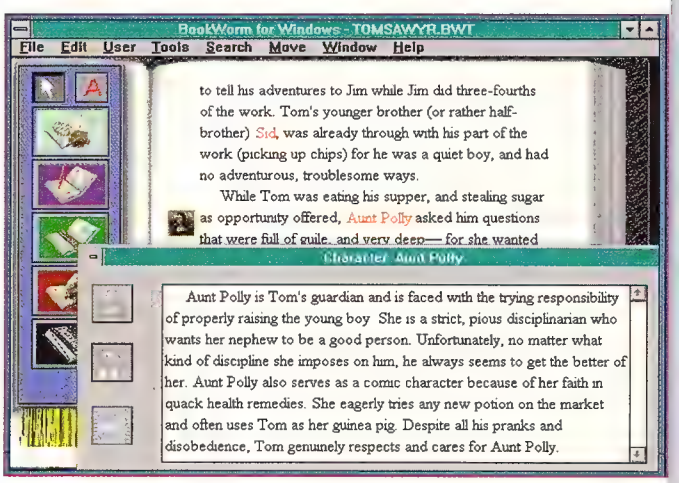
No instructions are provided, the intention being to encourage the user to employ the excellent help facilities, but also of course, to save costs. Executing the single disk through Windows creates a directory and installs the graphics platform on which the titles nest.

Presented in the form of an open book, the platform has a column of seven icons down the right-hand side, and eight pull-down menus along the top. As is usual with virtually all software, the functions of the icons are repeated in the pull-down menus, but a genial descriptor window appears on the icons to outline their function.

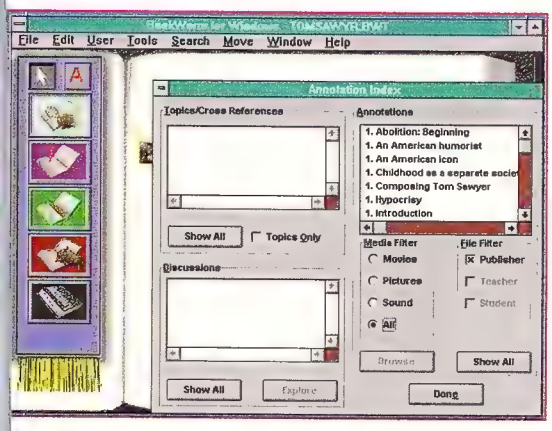
Two small icons at the top of the screen are represented by an arrow and a letter A. The arrow is used to highlight sections of text, and these can be ported to a clipboard or edited to customise the main text.

The letter A is rather confusing, in that one automatically expects it to represent text. However, its real use is the implementation of the Annotation File feature. This is probably the best feature in the entire software and elevates it above many of the literature-based titles I have seen.

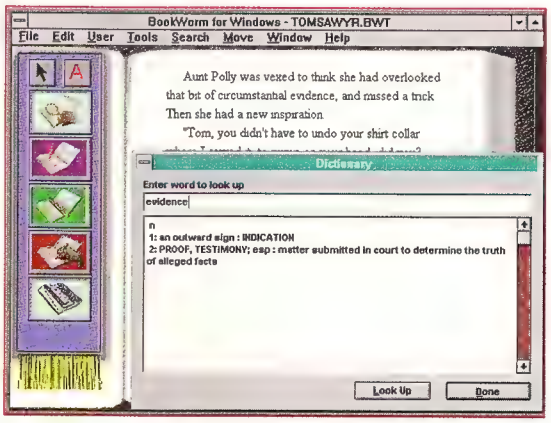
Annotation files come in three different types. First are the publishers, which load automatically each time a book is loaded. Identified by red coloured text, they are accessed by clicking on the page



Using the annotation notes and identifying a particular word, we can find out about specific information



All the topics contained in any of the annotation indexes can be brought forward as lists and accessed instantly



Having an online dictionary is a really useful tool to help find the meaning of an unknown word quickly

vhere the coloured text occurs.

This opens a dialog window, providing further information. If, for xample, on page four, Aunt Polly ppears in red text, clicking on the ext tells us that Aunt Polly is Tom awyer's aunt and guardian, who onstantly attempts to keep Tom and Huck's crazy antics under control.

Student annotation files appear in lue text as they are made. They an be saved and recalled to a pecific location in the book and erve as a way of adding detailed nformation or comments to articular sections of the text.

Teacher annotation files appear in reen. The principle behind these is provide teachers with the ability leave comments on both the text f the book and the student nnotation files, allowing criticism of student's work to be resident and ubject to review and revision.

eedless to say, the first and last pes of annotation file are read only the student.

Moving down to the next icon, a cture of a book being viewed under microscope signals the means of switching on and off all the different annotation files.

Below this a further picture of a book with a coloured pen indicates the highlighter feature. This allows chosen sections of the text to be captured and either transferred to a student annotation file or, in the case of a teacher, brought into one of the student files as a means of drawing attention to a specific point.

The next icon is simply a bookmark, but one with sophisticated features. Once selected, a requester window appears asking for reference input text. This is simply a cue to remind the user of the reason for the bookmark. Once labelled, a tab marker appears on the page of the book. Clicking on the tab, or alternatively on the bookmark icon, will provide a two-way cross-reference.

Margin notes is the next icon, and these appear down the right side of the page. They can either be stored as written text within the student file or even as voice recordings of up to 10 minutes.

The final icon is the dictionary tool and this contains all the words found in the book along with thousands of others. It is even possible to look up words in the annotation files.

Last but not least, down the right hand side is a collection of small icons, representing pictures, the spoken text of the book, or video clips depicting Mark Twain.

It would be a struggle to think of any other feature possible to add to these two titles.

There is every means of reading, sorting, rearranging or listening to the text as well as advanced features for annotating, cross-referencing and flagging points of focus.

The two books are classics, and no doubt many parent readers remember being engrossed in the antics of those two scallywags back during schooldays.

These titles offer the possibility of opening up the adventures of Tom and Huck to a younger audience, as well as providing an opportunity for students at examination level to add a higher dimension to their understanding.

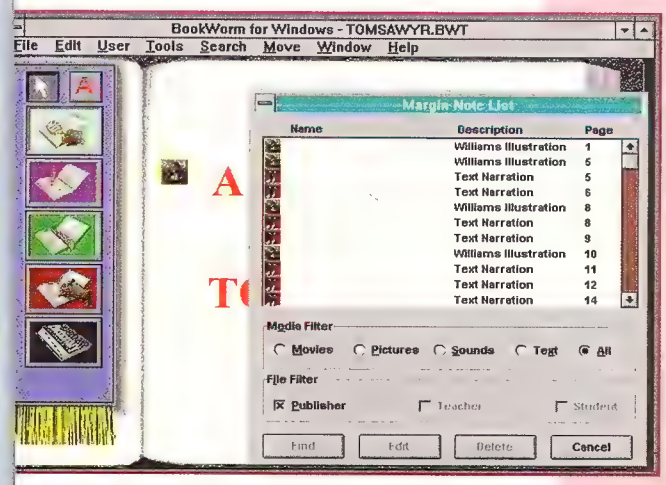
profile

Product	Huckleberry Finn/ Tom Sawyer
Price	£19.99
Format	CD-Rom
Supplier	Guildsoft
Tel	01752 895100

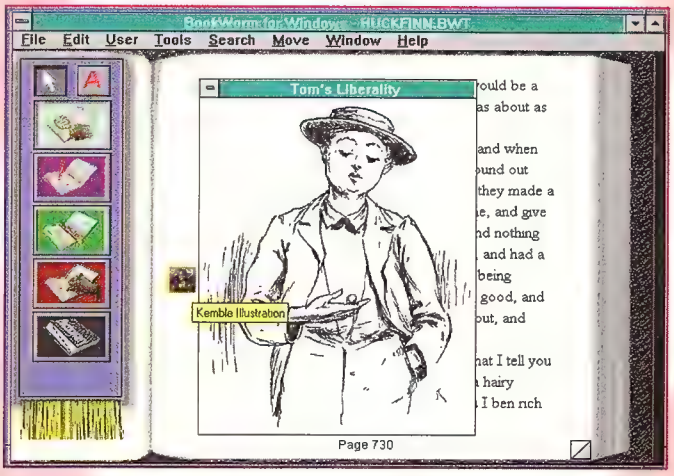
Summary

Extremely versatile and cheap, good fun too. Both packages also feature excellent original etchings

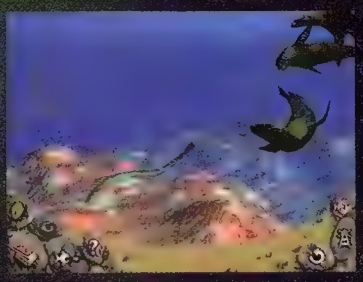
7

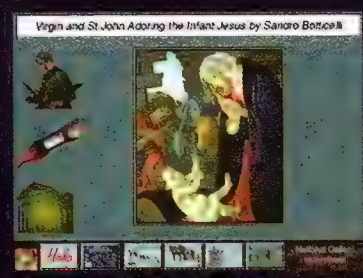


Down the left hand side of the page of each of the books is a collection of special icons which represent pictures, the audio track or movies



Here we see another of Kemble's original etchings, showing Tom Sawyer in his Sunday best





Anglia Multimedia

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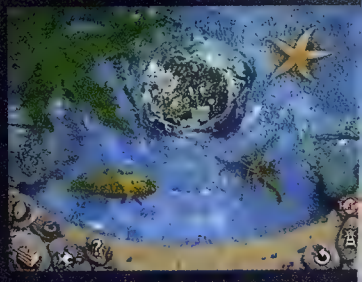

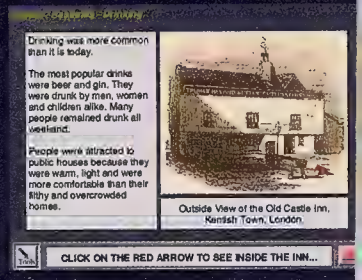

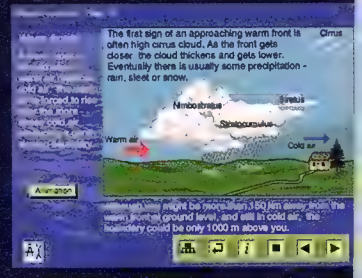

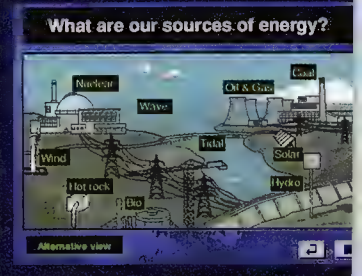

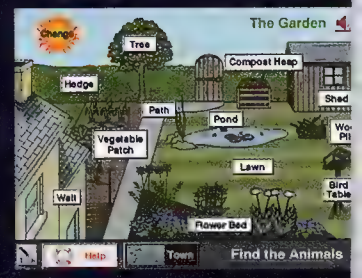

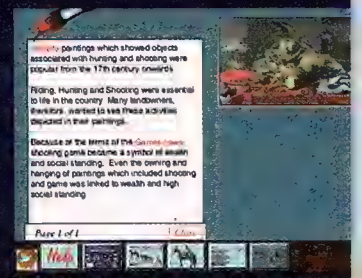

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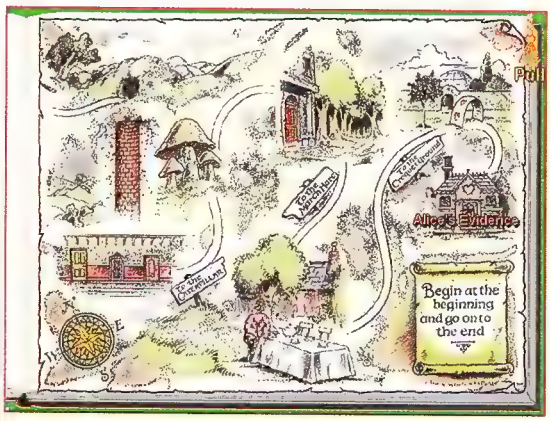
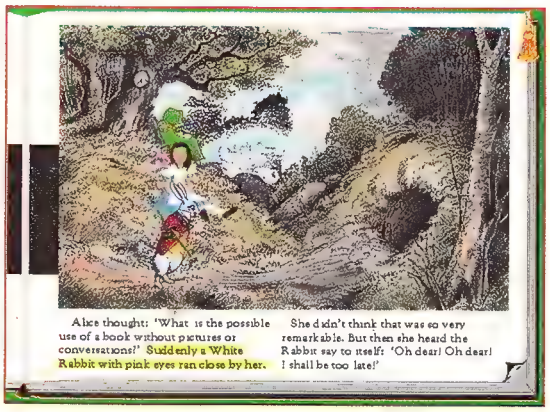
MPC. MAC. ACOR

the story tellers



The main menu screen and the route through the story is depicted as a path



Begin at the beginning and see Alice watching a well dressed but distressed rabbit, about to rush down a warren

Alice's Adventures in Wonderland

WHEN in 1896, Lewis Carroll bowed down to the pressures of market forces, he was recognising that fourpence was a more lucrative market than one shilling for his nursery version of Alice's Adventures in Wonderland.

So too, Europress Software have launched their version, the first in the Living Classic series, priced at a very competitive £19.99. Having spent considerable time looking at it, I'm sure Carroll would be more than delighted with the outcome.

It does not have the serious editorial or analytical facilities described in the Guildsoft releases. Rather, it is has a freshness and liveliness, guaranteed to delight kids.

The whole product was generated using Klick & Play, Europress's Windows game-creating software released last autumn. Apart from a very minor niggle regarding speed and screen refresh, the outcome is very professional.

Alice's Adventures demonstrates that anyone with a combination of creativity and dedication can achieve incredibly sophisticated outcomes, without dedicated coding knowledge.

The press information told me that no manual was included, simply because it was not needed, and basically, this is quite true. I gleaned all the information required from the fold-open front of the box. This presents a picture of the map, used as the main menu, and the surrounding notes provide all the necessary information to get into the story.

The software is divided into six locations and four games, the latter all being related to characters and events from the story. As the story unfolds, the text is displayed along with animated pictures, as part of the pages of an open book.

There is the choice of following Carroll's advice to *Begin at the beginning and go to the end*. This can be easily achieved by clicking on the open scroll, bearing that very quote.

Alternatively, you can click anywhere along the illustrated path which meanders around the map, and join the events at any stage.

The entire Alice adventure is divided into seven locations and uses delightful illustrations to present the story. For example, if we go to The Pig and Pepper chapter, we meet the duchess, cook and Cheshire cat.

The text of the story is displayed on the left hand side of an open book, and a coloured illustration on the right. As the story is told, with the help of Shakespearean actors reading the script, the relevant text is highlighted on the page.

This process is embellished by the illustration turning to an animation to convey the events of the story. So, reflecting the well known plot, the cook starts slinging pots pans and assorted culinary equipment around the room, and the duchess holds a screaming baby in her arms.

The baby bears a remarkable resemblance to a piglet, while the Cheshire cat simply sits there and grins throughout the proceedings. Having been given responsibility for the welfare of the baby, Alice wanders off into the woods and once again meets the grinning feline with a disposition for vanishing.

The atmosphere generated at all the locations reflects well the childhood memories I have of the story, and the illustrative material is both enigmatic and humorous.

En route, there are four occasions when red heart shapes appear as the mouse passes along the road, and these provide access to the four different games within the package. They certainly won't win any gold medals for innovation or originality, being simple platform, pelmanism or arcade based, but they do add an extra dimension, enhancing the product's lifespan.

Moving around is achieved by clicking on a pull cord in the top corner of the screen which provides icons of books with the action written on them. An icon on the map screen produces a page of information on the life of Lewis Carroll.

Europress intend to release further titles in this series at two monthly intervals, and certainly seem to have a winning idea. I particularly like the fact that the CD-Roms can also be played on an ordinary hi-fi, allowing just the narrative to be enjoyed.

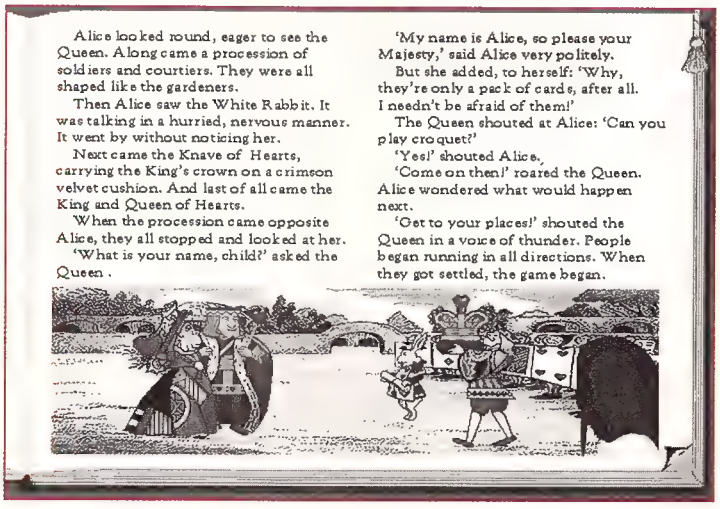
profile

Product	Alice's Adventures In Wonderland
Price	£19.99
Supplier	Europress Software
Format	CD-Rom
Tel	01625 859444

Summary

Cheap, good sound and images but can be a little slow. The games are an added, if rather unoriginal dimension

6



Alice looked round, eager to see the Queen. Along came a procession of soldiers and courtiers. They were all shaped like the gardeners.

Then Alice saw the White Rabbit. It was talking in a hurried, nervous manner. It went by without noticing her.

Next came the Knave of Hearts, carrying the King's crown on a crimson velvet cushion. And last of all came the King and Queen of Hearts.

When the procession came opposite Alice, they all stopped and looked at her.

'What is your name, child?' asked the Queen.

'My name is Alice, so please your Majesty,' said Alice very politely.

But she added, to herself: 'Why, they're only a pack of cards, after all. I needn't be afraid of them!'

The Queen shouted at Alice: 'Can you play croquet?'

'Yes!' shouted Alice.

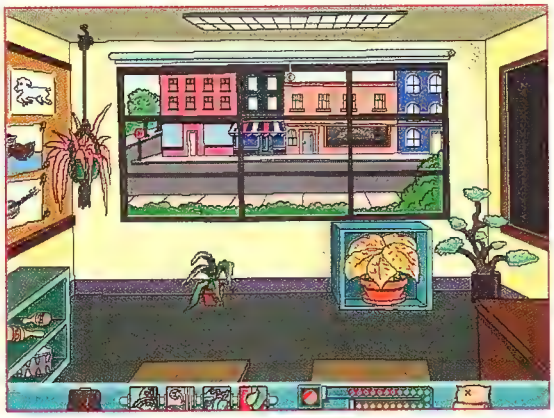
'Come on then!' roared the Queen. Alice wondered what would happen next.

'Get to your places!' shouted the Queen in a voice of thunder. People began running in all directions. When they got settled, the game began.

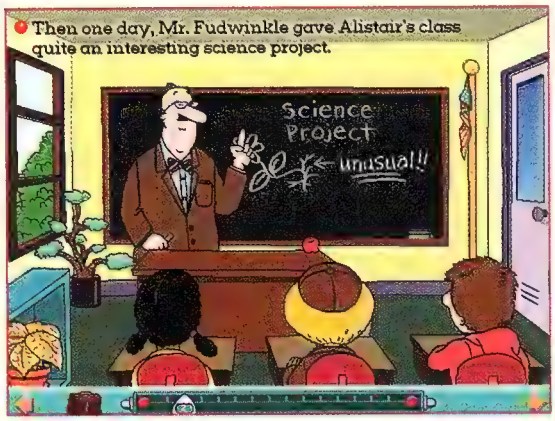
The queen's croquet ground, and Alice is asked about her skills in the game

living room

the story tellers



The game included with the package, Alien Plant Search, requires hidden alien plants to be found



Alistair's teacher sets the children a science project: To find the most interesting plant

Alistair and The Alien Invasion

IF you have encountered the children's book of the same name, this multimedia version from Ablac will simply delight you.

Apart from the beautifully illustrated and narrated story, there is just so much to investigate and experience as the story travels through the plot.

Fourteen different locations have options to move to adjacent screens, broadening the panorama, and adding literally thousands of comical animations, sound effects and activities.

The story can be narrated non-stop from start to finish, or a page at a time.

The text is displayed on screen over the illustrations, and additional speech from the characters accompanies the story. It really is a pleasure to hear an articulate English voice as the main character, Alistair Grittle, instead of some goody-goody American kid rambling on.

The main controls are along the bottom of the screen, and really are so simple to use. A slider bar moves around the 14 screens, and reversed arrows go back or forward on screen.

Apart from the main story, a challenging educational game called Alien Plant Quest is also available from the main menu, and this uses all the locations in the book.

Small sections of plants are displayed on the menu bar, and the object is to seek out the complete plant, wherever it may be located.

This is not as simple as it might sound, as often the plants are stored in cupboards, in storage containers in the spaceship, or in windows of someone's house. There is a limit to the number of guesses allowed, and frankly I lost out three times before I got it right. What the software does, however, is change the plants every time the game is played, so there is no obsolescence.

There is even a facility for parents to customise the nature of the plants, and in particular, the locations in which they are hidden. So if a child finds one of the locations particularly amusing, the entire range of sought plants could be hidden there.

This also can be used as a means of simplifying the game and making it more accessible to younger children.

I liked this software very much indeed. The sound quality is superb, there are no sudden screen blankings, the movement between screens is very fast and the content extremely entertaining. My two 8-year-old testers gave it full marks, and they are pretty seasoned veterans. ■

Alistair tracks down the aliens with his home-made invisibility ray. It's not like any ordinary invasion

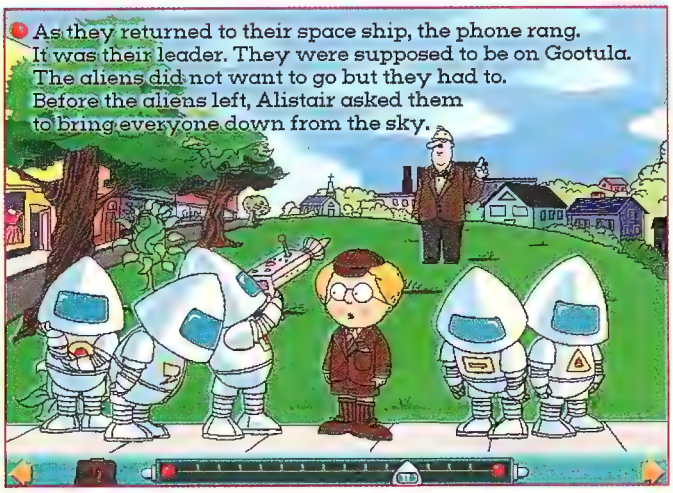
profile

Product	Alistair and the Alien Invasion
Price	£34.95
Supplier	Ablac
Tel	01626 332233
Format	CD-Rom

Summary

Full of events, and the main character has an English accent though the rest have a typically grating American drawl

8



Having caused mayhem, the aliens are recalled by their leader, and Alistair has saved the world

family test panel

IF you would like the members of your family to have an opportunity to express an opinion on the quality of today's educational software, why not join the PC Home Family Panel of testers on page 68. Send your details – ages, number of children – to:

We Want to Join the Family Panel, PC Home, IDG Media, Media House, Adlington Park, Macclesfield, Cheshire SK10 4NP

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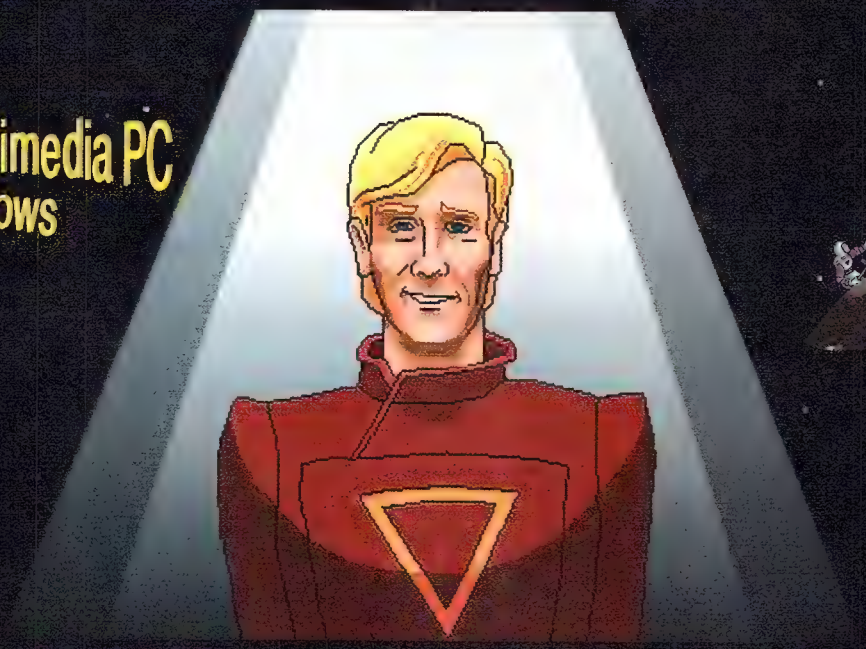

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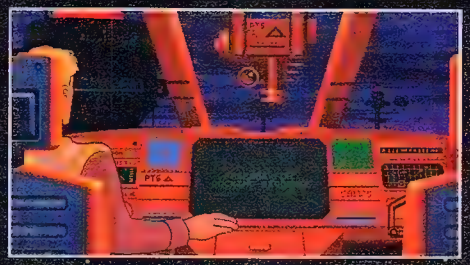

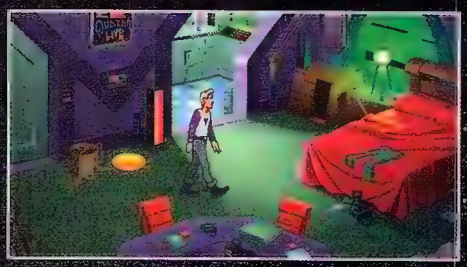

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- ☐ 486DX2-80 4Mb, 256K **£379**
- ☐ 486DX4-100 4Mb, 256K **£409**
- ☐ Pentium 75 8Mb, 256K **£709**
- ☐ Pentium 90 8Mb, 256K **£789**
- ☐ Pentium 100 8Mb, 256K **£869**

2. Select the IDE hard drive

- ☐ 120Mb **£30**
- ☐ 340Mb **£70**
- ☐ 540Mb **£120**
- ☐ 850Mb **£170**
- ☐ 1.2 Gb **£270**

3. Select the screen

- ☐ 14" SVGA **£120**
- ☐ 14" SVGA Digital NI **£160**
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The family panel sits

We asked the PC Home family panel to give their verdict on one of this year's best family entertainment product, Kingdom: The Far Reaches

AT *PC Home* we endeavour to achieve balance in our reviews by regularly asking consumers what they think of products. Schools have tested software for us, and from time to time you'll have seen comments from individual testing families.

We feel our educational reviewers' opinions are fair, knowledgeable and credible. However, no reviewer is an island, and often the best judge of how useful an educational product is a family similar to those it was intended for.

Tastes can vary from family to family, so we've decided to go one step further than other PC magazines. This is the second in the series of PC Home family panel reviews which will include comments from an army of multimedia families the length and breadth of the country.

about the product

THIS is a graphical, interactive adventure that is suitable for the whole family. It is available on CD-Rom at £44.99 from Interplay (01235 821666).

Superb graphics and challenging gameplay make Interplay's Kingdom, an ideal solution for family entertainment

the Pickerings

WE all thought the animation, graphics and sound track were excellent. It was very simple to install, and runs through Windows; you only require a mouse to play – no difficult instructions and speed is seldom important. The storyline was good, a mixture of Lord of the Rings and Never-ending Story.

We're still operating at apprentice level and don't think we've completed the mission yet!

Both myself (Dean) and Chris (12) were disappointed that only one game could be saved, and feel it would be better if all the family members could save their games.

Charlotte (10) was the last to try the game as she thought it might to be too difficult - she succeeded in finding more items than the rest of us!

Movement on the map screen was too restrictive, although the use of the travelling spells opened up the terrain – I would have preferred to move more freely around the whole area.

It is the kind of game you need to play several times to discover the right moves and avoid danger. Chris feels it is very addictive. As none of us has succeeded in finding all the relics, we will be spending a bit more time in the Kingdom.

Dean Pickering with wife Sheila and children Charlotte (10) and Chris

7 verdict

the Irelands

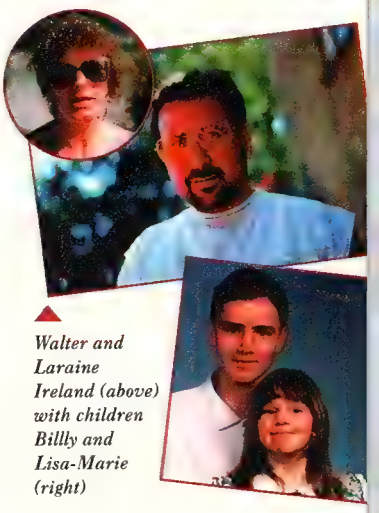
AFTER a long slog trying to convert my system configuration from upper memory to conventional memory I finally loaded the game. Our first impression was *This is great.* The graphics, although not 100 per cent clear, were of a very high standard, mixing stills with animation.

It took a while getting to grips with where we were supposed to go, and though we played for hours daily, we still have not retrieved any of the relics.

The sound effects of some of the characters were not always very clear, but the use of the re-run facility came in useful to compensate for this. Still, we managed to get around the map in between being killed more times than we can remember.

Overall we found that although a good game, the background music was agitating. Our eldest boy, Bill, got bored easily, and found the game had its limitations, while our youngest, Lisa Marie, found it beyond her capabilities.

5 verdict



Walter and Laraine Ireland (above) with children Billly and Lisa-Marie (right)

the Turnbulls

THOUGH not mentioned in the manual, this program ran quite happily on a 4Mb computer under Windows.

The only files written to the hard disk are a small configuration file containing details of the sound card used and a saved game file if used.

The CD-Rom also contains an on-line copy of the manual, but it can't be accessed during the game which makes it rather pointless unless running under Windows.

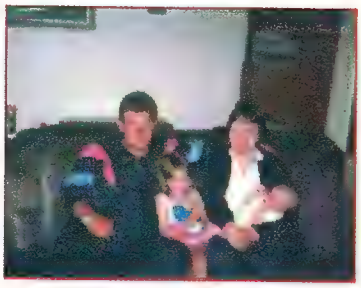
It is nice to see the main menu offering both Apprentice (easy) and Wizard mode (not so easy – but not hard) levels, as not all the family are born adventurers.

Apprentice mode, having some of the death sequences removed, gives the opportunity to explore and become familiar with the interface, while the Save Game option means you don't have to start at the beginning should you reach an untimely demise.

Excellent digitised speech and movie-score music combined with Disney quality animated sequences created a very atmospheric game. Penny (21), and Kay (14), thought it was like Knightmare, the TV adventure programme. The problem solving was a little too sophisticated for Helen (7), though she did enjoy the animation, particularly the satisfying crunch when falling from the mountains.

Though the game does not purport to be educational, the problem solving really gets the old grey matter into gear. We can't wait for the sequel. A brilliant adventure with no installation hassles. One day all games will be made this way.

9 verdict



David and Kay Turbull, six-year-old Helen and a new addition to the family

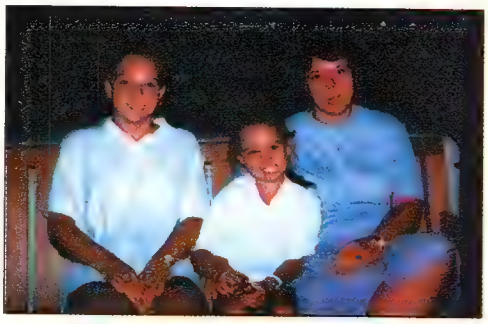
the Webbs

AFTER fiddling around to obtain the required amount of lower memory, the game started up with excellent moody music and superb graphics. The characters' different voices added even more atmosphere, though some dialogue has to be played many times to understand it.

Travelling within the game is good, although we spent most of our time aimlessly wandering around getting killed a lot! The help screen is anything but helpful, offering *save game, new game, demo* and *quit*. Nothing actually helpful. In a game of this complexity, proper help is vital to achieve anything. Karen (9) thought it was colourful, but got bored quickly, *going round in circles*. Hayley (15) persevered longer, but admitted to *getting nowhere fast*. Mum and dad were struggling, even on the apprentice level, but were determined to find the three relics before they became relics themselves.

6 verdict

Karen and Hayley Webb and Mum at leisure



the Rutlands

KINGDOM is obviously targeted at the younger end of the age spectrum with its bright and colourful appearance, cartoon style graphics, bouncy music and simple-to-use interface.

When I asked the children for their comments, I couldn't get them to leave the machine alone long enough to get their opinions! This was a good sign that they were really enjoying it.

Once they had decided to cooperate and play as a team they began to make progress. The graphics are really excellent – a bit like watching a cartoon but having control over the characters. When the action gets a little frantic the scenes do tend to blur slightly but not enough to spoil the enjoyment.

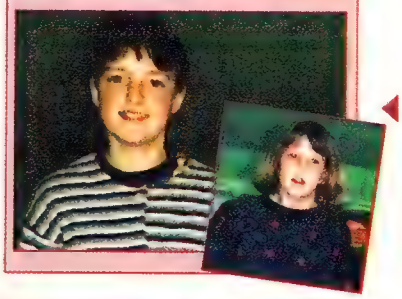
Sarah loved the little descriptive bubbles when the cursor was placed over the icons which removed any need to keep consulting the manual.

Both children were really impressed with the music which enhanced the idea of a real cartoon no end and was very professional.

As a parent I was impressed with the fact that the whole game ran from the CD and did not take up any hard drive space apart from a tiny sound card configuration file.

Another thing that impressed the children was how easy the game was to get into as neither read the instructions but still got quite a way into the adventure before reluctantly having to dig out the manual.

9 verdict



Terri (12) and Sahrah (13) Rutland were inpressed with the music

If you want your family to join our panel of testers please send details – ages, number of children – to: Family Panel, PC Home, Media House, Adlington Park, Adlington SK10 4NP.

the seal of approval

In order to gain the PC Home Family Seal of Approval, a package needs to collate a score of 35 out of 50 or an average of 7 out of 10 from our panel.

Obviously, a family should read the reviews and pay heed to the comments of the whole panel as one family's meat may be another's poison.

However, if a product gets the PC Home Family Seal of Approval, you can rest assured that the majority verdict was that its was a fine and worthy piece of software.

What was the verdict on Interplay's Kingdom?. No one really disliked it, while on the positive side, two families loved it.

The final score was 36 which just squeezes it in with a thumbs up. So Kingdom: The Far Reaches does get the seal of approval. Take a bow Interplay.

see PC Home's professional review verdict – page 106

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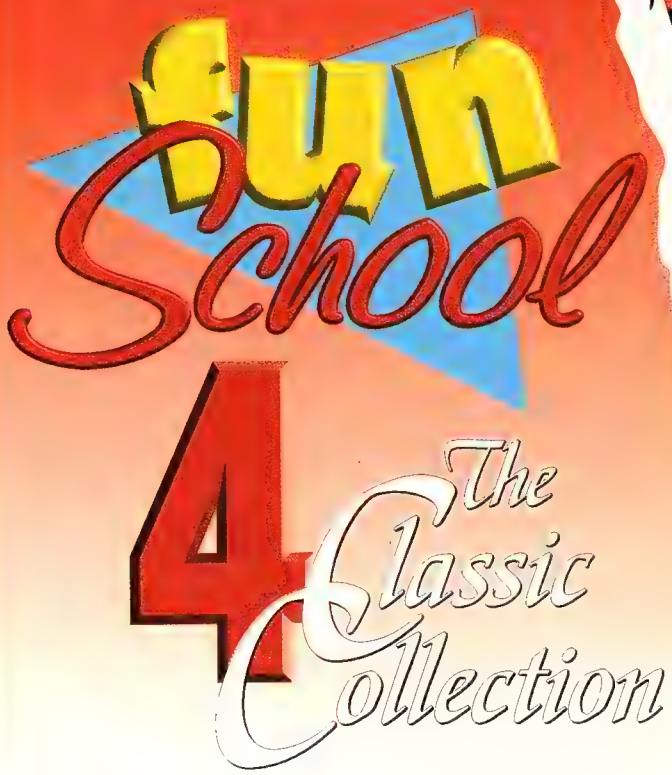

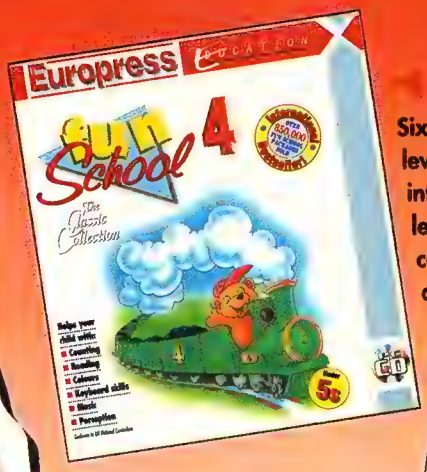

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Isn't that original?

Kerry Culbert explores some educational software that will help make your children more creative

THE trouble with schools, colleges and universities is that adherence to timetables, syllabuses and key stages leaves little time for children to think originally or develop writing, artistic and musical skills.

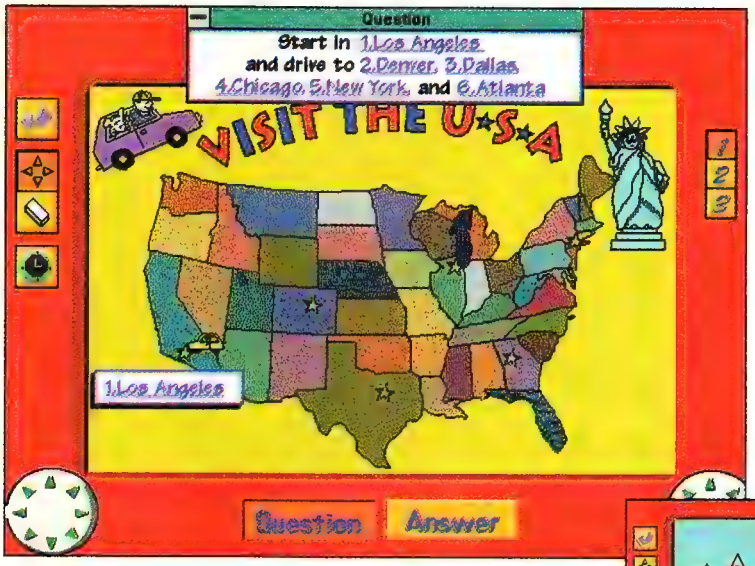
With no vehicle to express emotions, reflections, impressions and dreams, it's little wonder the result is frustrated and bored teenagers, dissatisfied and grey civil servants, and ever-growing dole queues.

Teach children to rely on their own initiative and you could be rearing the next Richard Branson. Exploring ideas, musical movements or dabbling in art can be relaxing or instil a real zest and interest in life.

Electronic software across the curriculum helps kids to think about the arts, sciences and humanities in unusual and different ways. This includes story-telling products like Europress's Story Book Weaver which combines composition and artistic skills to get kids thinking creatively.

There's a host of single-topic products which indulge painting, story telling, musical composition, video production and cartoon making before the fears, phobias and restrictions of adult life hamper the urge to do something of your own making.

If children can think creatively in the home, who knows what they can achieve later in the workplace?



Travel the US and get to grips with those control devces

Etch-A-Sketch

I GREW up in the pre-electronic age when a portable doodle pad was non-electronic and black and white. Hours were spent drawing pictures in that little red box.

Funnily enough, these earlier toys were one of the first pointer devices, manually controlled. Now electronic, Etch-A-Sketch may root you to the desk unless you can afford £2,000 for a portable PC, but there's just much more scope, and you can still twiddle buttons until fingers tingle.

The directional draw knobs help you move around the screen, or you can opt for the button to design things with straight lines such as church walls and the like. The colour palette is extensive enough, and even while tracing, the outlines can be manipulated to spread into a spectrum of colours – if that's the way you like it.

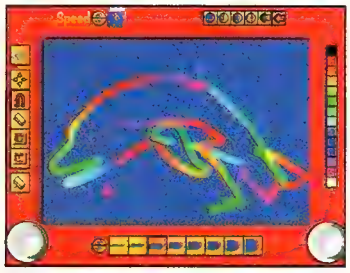
The colour effect buttons at the top of the screen enable you to blend marks or create sheens, and rubbing out can be achieved in a fun way as mistakes disappear in swirls or blobs. No evidence of that fusty, smelly eraser ever present in conventional art work.

Trace cute animals like dolphins, or draw and print out a picture by scratching surfaces away. Make original pieces using existing artwork, or guide cars across the USA and find out more about the locations as you whizz through the states.

Etch-A-Sketch teaches kids how to think creatively with a modicum of guidance and control. Drawing in itself calls for original thought as well as skill, but constructing landscapes from scratch as in Landscape Builder really helps kids to address and experiment with subject matter they may not have considered, such as road building or river cutting.

Marry this with over a dozen games, including one where a ship has to be guided to a chest of treasure in a basic logo fashion, and you'll see why Etch-A-Sketch is such a good way to get children creating on the computer as well as at the easel. It's an ideal way to introduce nursery and primary aged children to the joys of whacky art.

You can create original pictures using pre-drawn shapes



Trace shapes in graduated colours

profile

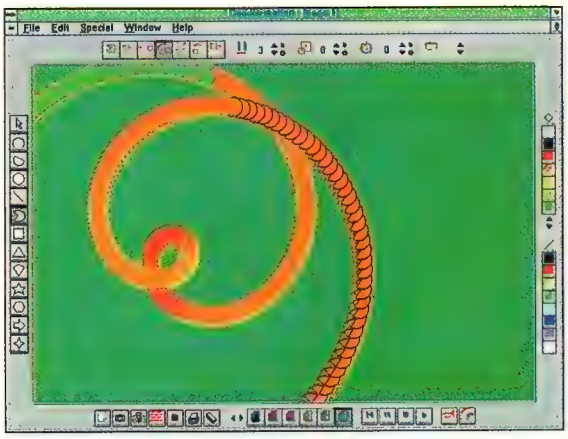
Product	Etch-A-Sketch
Price	£19.95
Format	Floppy
Supplier	Guildsoft
Tel	0752 895100

Summary

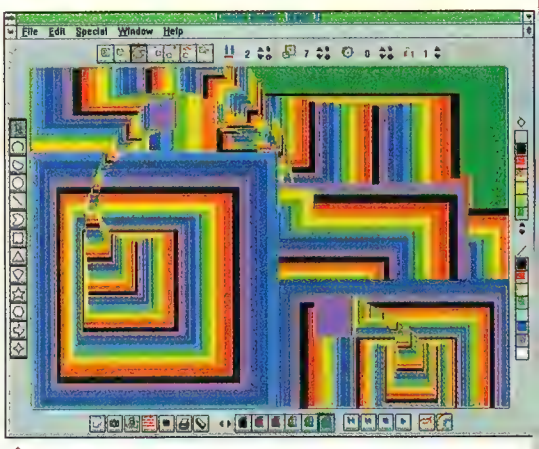
A really interesting and creative way to develop coordination, planning and design skills

8

Isn't that original?



You can make swirling patterns using all kinds of shapes



Learn about depth as you play with interesting designs

Doodle-mation

ARE you the kind of person who doodles in the margin of the maths exercise book while the teacher tries to get across the intrinsic value of fractions? Do mum or dad have a tendency to scribble meaningless designs on notepads while clinching that latest deal over the telephone? Why not relieve stress, focus thoughts and get creative on the desktop blending colour, motion and sound so that you're ready to write that story or finish that essay?

By the same makers as Etch-A-Sketch, Doodle-mation may not be stuffed with games and activities, but what's there is absorbing, and the controls are a lot less difficult to master.

The behaviour icons at the top of the screen make it possible to create multi-directional patterns which move even as they're being created.

The spacing, rate of growth and scale of rotation all have their own individual settings, and the shape buttons running down the left hand side of the screen vary from stars to hexagons.

Why not fill the screen with finished designs, print them out and frame them? It's a much more original way to decorate the bedroom wall than with cheap, printed posters.

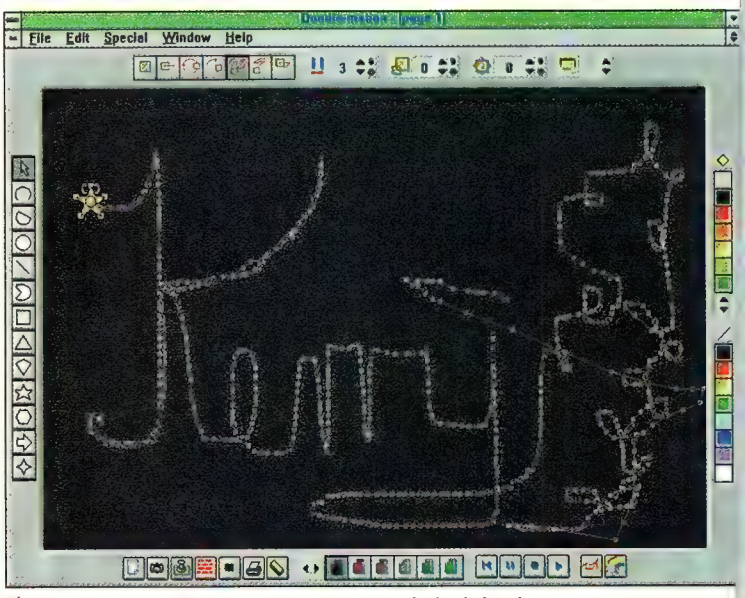
Children and adults will find this absorbing, but it has occurred to me that autistic children may particularly enjoy manipulating shapes and patterns, rebounding them off a ceiling in a bounce path, for instance.

The ability to add sound effects adds to the illusions of depth and distance somehow, and writing words freehand mean it's possible to add titles and lettering to home created pattern movies, with more get up and go than primeval gunge.

Little extras, like the colour cycling options, add to the effect of active images by moving shapes around in ever changing bands of colour.

One for the whole family this. Guildsoft have just released another art-based product from ScreenMagic. Called Stick-Ups, it's a creative way to store notes and messages on the desktop.

For £19.95 you can customise colours, sizes, patterns, text, keyboard commands and so on to your heart's content.



Experiment with freehand logos to that finished polish to home movies

Images can be printed and stuck on the bedroom wall to replace posters

profile

Product	Doodle-mation
Price	£19.95
Format	Floppy
Supplier	Guildsoft
Tel	0752 895100

Summary

Entertaining relaxation through doodling that will certainly appeal to young and old alike

8

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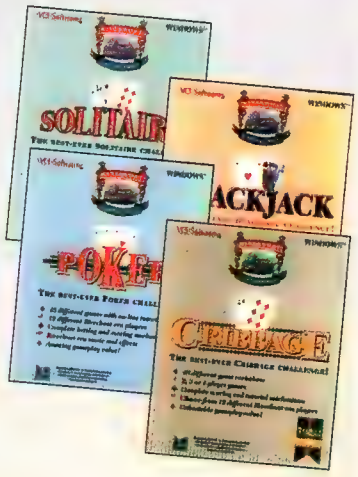

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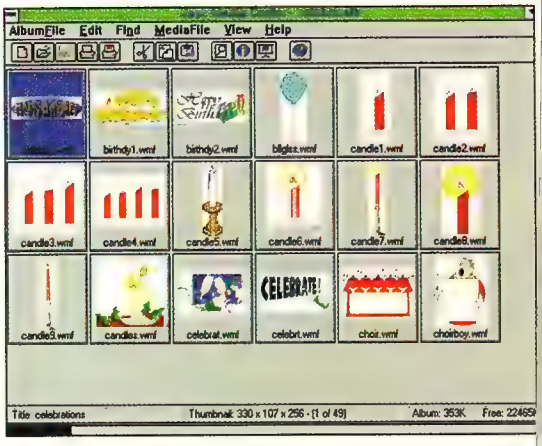
Isn't that original?

▲ *Sound & Vision is great for making multimedia presentations*



▲ *The raw material's there to make celebration cards*

Sound & Vision

WHAT RM lack in slickness of presentation they make up for in terms of quantity and quality of content. Many of their products are heavily curriculum based, so it's interesting to look at a piece of software intended more for general use.

Often a child can feel restricted by a highly structured program which maybe sets out with a distinct aim in mind like enhancing writing skills or teaching composition. All kids often want is some resource material to provide a starting point and in some cases inspiration.

Sound & Vision is a multimedia resources collection. Maybe video production is of interest for instance, but many of the programs in this vein, including EA's Video Jam and VCI's Cartoonin', lack the ability to manipulate real life images with their colourful but unrealistic cartoon graphics.

Project work or albums of family events can be enhanced with clipart, animations, sound effects, music files and photographs from the real world, from days out on bouncy castles to pictures of park benches.

These can be incorporated in desktop published or multimedia productions, for use on the front of greeting cards, or to help illustrate favourite pastimes like astrology or gardening. There are some particularly stunning close up shots of flowers. There's enough material here to cover almost any topic, and a child as young as eight could put Sound & Vision to full use.

▲ *Draw on pictures from nature and paste into science projects and such*

profile

Product	Sound & Vision
Price	£69
Format	CD
Supplier	RM
Tel	01235 826789

Summary
For general use, the quality is fine but quantity is a little lacking

5

Peter Pan

COINED as the first *story painting adventure*, this gives five to nine-year-olds the opportunity to change the course of events in this classical Disney tale.

Paintbox pals, from Jazz Painter who paints Peter out of trouble to Winston Whoosh, a loveable eraser who will wipe all your troubles away, are the main paths to creativity. Once the changes have been made watch the story unfold the way you wrote it.

With the help of Nick Lead you can draw dot-to-dot pictures, and save creations to play back later. The creativity isn't so much in what is created but the aptness of the decision making. Each new situation requires choosing an appropriate friend, taking the lead o the magical stars to see where and how a story can be affected, and sitting back to watch the animated outcome. Not only is creativity reinforced but reading skills are built upon as the captions are followed.

Realising that certain actions can make a reaction increases the primary child's awareness of cause and effect, and by making certain choices, a new and original story can result.

There are more than 250 possibl events. True, most of the material i there to play with already, but showing kids the multiple paths open from one simple tale will give them the spur needed to run off an write the sequel themselves.

After adventuring, why not practise drawing cone shapes and characters with the guidance of a supplementary drawing booklet, an try out some new ideas in readiness for Peter Pan's retirement.

profile

Product	Peter Pan
Price	£34.99
Supplier	Electronic Arts
Tel	01753 549442

Summary
A story painting adventure that will awaken the imagination of most youngsters

7

▲ *The Paintbox Pals are the paths to creativity in Peter Pan*

▲ *Draw the plot and it becomes a reality*

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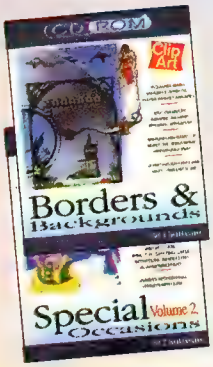

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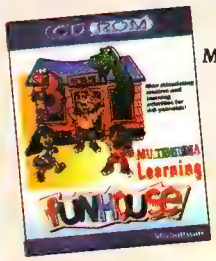
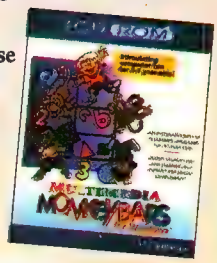


VCROM 06
Multimedia Learning Funhouse
(left)
VCROM 07
Multimedia Monkey Bars for Windows *(right)*
VCROM 09
Multimedia Jurassic ABC



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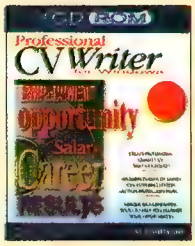
VCROM 05
True Type Font Elegance



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TRMC

Isn't that original?

There are two paths to creativity on the main menu screen

Paint familiar scenes with Teddy then animate characters

profile

Product	Teddy's Hide and Seek
Price	£24.99
Format	CD
Supplier	Mindscape
Tel	01444 246333

Summary

A clear and enjoyable introduction to art for toddlers

6

Teddy's Hide and Seek

IF the kids around your breakfast table are pint sized (3 to 8), a number of packages on the market will encourage early experimentation with colour and line.

Drawing freehand is a logical way to practise holding pencils when the time comes to write and create stories or do maths. Drawing also brings on fine motor skills as the small child manipulates the mouse buttons and painting icons.

Look out for two creative components in this package, Colors and Animation. There's nothing particularly special about the art section, with simple brush strokes and a basic palette of 8 to 16 colours to fill in various scenes and landscapes. There are many cross-curricular packages which include simplistic painting pages like this.

Animation is more involved and encourages children to place different characters in settings of their choice which spring to life when placed appropriatel: Rabbits leap across a field or tortoises crawl along a wall.

Children are restricted to nine backgrounds, and the grids of pre-animated animals, but they have to choose the scenes, characters and accompanying music, and by making the hare leap in various directions each animation is unique. There's also a puzzle and memory section thrown in for good measure – a chance to breathe between creative bursts.

Later on the child can progress to more sophisticated video production software like Video Jam in the EA*Kids range from Electronic Arts, for the more discerning child of eight years upwards. Also in the EA*Kids range is Art Center, a more complex painting alternative for children aged three or more which includes stickers, stamps and block art.

I'd still advise starting off with Teddy's Hide and Seek, though, as toddlers often come on more quickly if they're not flooded with too much stimulus at once. Watch out for that cute teddy poking his head into the paint pot to remind the child where to explore next.

Wonder Brush

THIS is a much more sophisticated paint and design program. It comes on two floppies which take a while to install under Dos, but the sluggishness of this is balanced by the absence of distinct skill levels. There's nothing more annoying than fiddling around with menus and grading drawing ability rather than just getting on with new designs.

This doesn't mean that there's nothing to suit distinct age levels. Five-year-olds can get to grips with colour and texture, filling in pre-drawn outlines including a farmyard scene which always goes down well with small children.

Freehand drawing is almost as much fun as Doodle-mation. Adjust the colour banding in the palette until there's a range of colours to match your socks, and why not select a song to work with for inspiration?

Select tools which draw circles, dots, stars, broken lines or throw up mirror images of what has already been created. Use the directional arrows to change the size of a section of the window, or maybe to blow up a design full screen.

Plump for the stamp to use 160 pictures of just about anything to enhance your work. By using the alphabet and number palette it's possible to caption drawings or add text to birthday card designs which can then be printed out.

This drawing package lies somewhere between Etch-A-Sketch and Hide and Seek in terms of quantity, type and quality of materials available to the budding artist. The mouse control is fine, an important consideration with packages of this kind as creativity will be marred by a frustrated casting aside of the mouse if the child can't even put paint to paper. There's quite a lot to play around with here quickly.

Part of VCI's Create & Learn series is Cartoonin' for constructing animated cartoon adventures and is suitable for six-year-olds to adults. Also from VCI is Animals Clip Art, 100 images to add illustrations to school projects and creative work.

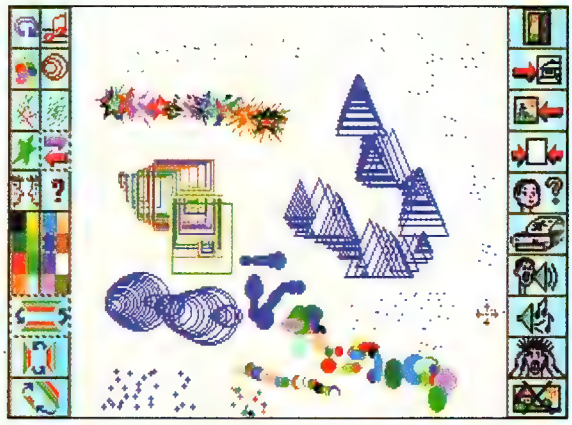
profile

Product	Wonder Brush
Price	£24.99
Format	Floppy
Supplier	VCI
Tel	0181-810 8383

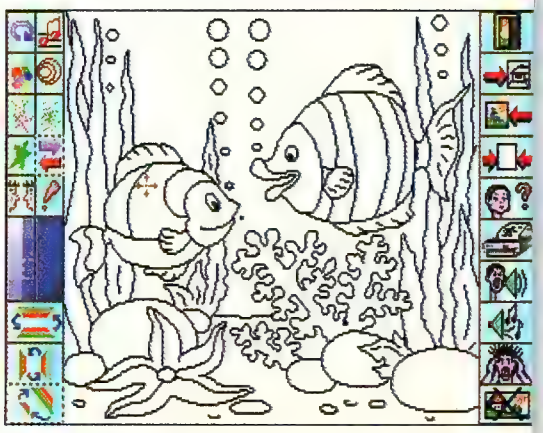
Summary

An ideal multi-featured painting and graphics kit for 5-12-year-olds to experiment with

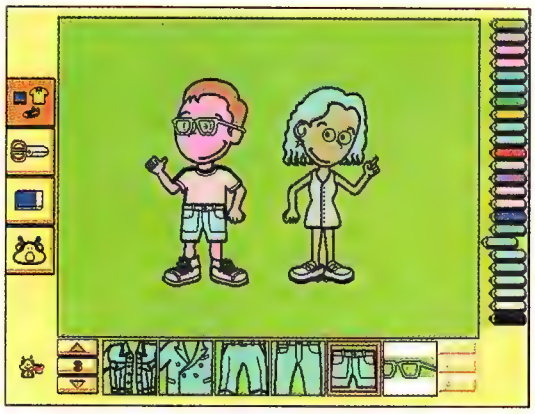
7



You can make use of a host of different shapes



Colour in summer scenes using the extensive palette



Enjoy blending colours in Art Center's costume activity

Art Center

IF EA*Kids products already play a prominent role in the family's computer library, there's no doubt this is the right choice.

Children can feel more comfortable moving around the desktop if the structure is similar to what they've been used to, and the fact that old EA friends like Scooter of Scooter's Magic Castle fame are there to help out in the instruction manual and also make appearances on screen as pictures to be coloured in, quickly puts children at their ease.

Although intended for children as young as three, at 30 I still managed to get some pleasure stamping stickers into interesting backgrounds and indulging in a little block art.

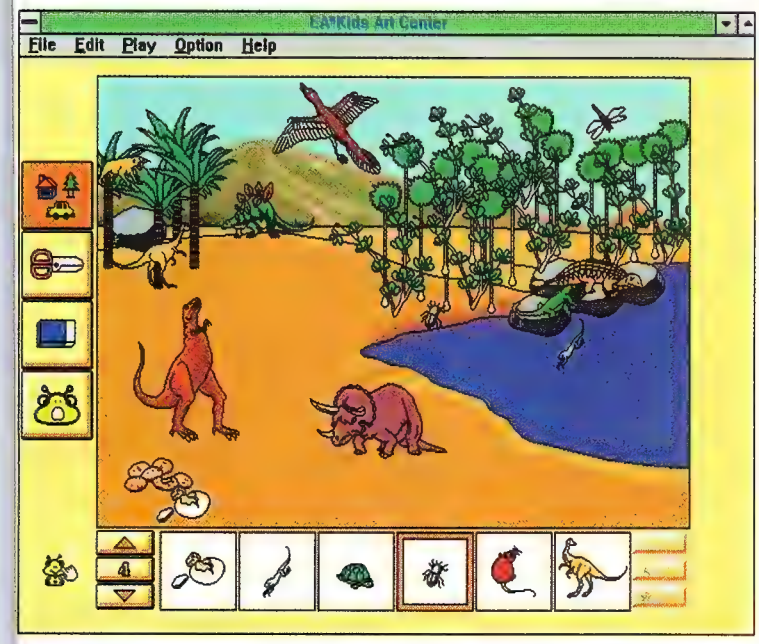
The Early Learning Centre sell oodles of mosaic kits containing hundreds of coloured shapes which kids are then meant to stick on magnetic boards or place pegs in boards to make anything from a train to a doll.

This is a great way to improve fine motor skills as tiny fingers match blocks and colours in a variety of shades. The trouble with these bits and pieces is that they get scattered everywhere, and usually end up in the the hoover.

As children totally dictate the shape of the picture, the very young probably won't get to the point of playing with a lot of different shapes as they'll be too busy concentrating on drawing the actual pictures themselves.

Art Center helps kids get more from block art by pre-drawing the shapes. Children then have to scroll through numbered panels of shapes until they reach ones which will fill the images effectively. There's still plenty of scope for creativity, though, as they have the freedom to combine shapes and make colour sequences of their own design.

The stickers may be cartoon, but they reflect the real world. There are some wonderful dinosaurs complete with vegetation and insects from the Jurassic age. These are bright and cheerful but accurately drawn, and the landscapes in the stickers section



Detailed drawing has gone into the stickers – a great aid to imaginative play

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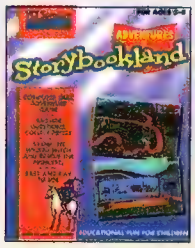

VCL 253
Adventures in Storybookland
Puzzle adventure game

VCL 254
Playing with Shapes
Constructive play for pre-schoolers

VCL 255
Playing with Colours
Constructive play for pre-schoolers

VCL 256
Wonderbrush
Highly featured fun painting package

VCL 257
Cartoonin'
Fabulous cartoon animation program

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VCI Software

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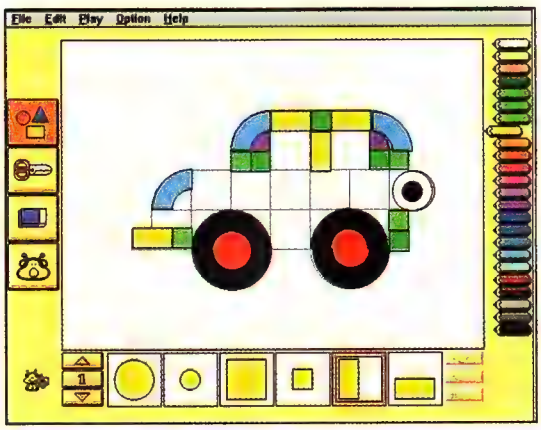
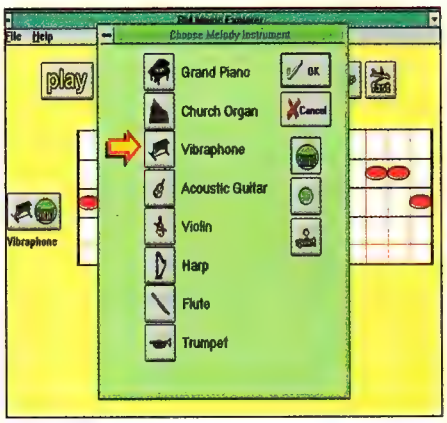
living room

Isn't that original?



Block art goes state-of-the-art electronic in Art Center



Learn to string together musical compositions

are interesting in themselves. All the basic topic areas are there, including an empty dream house which has to be filled with people and furniture.

I confess to one terribly girly pursuit as a child – buying a comic called *Bunty* each week just so I cut cut out doll figures and clip on different outfits. The strange thing is I've never again had such a full wardrobe to play with.

Anyway, there's a costume activity which lets children dress up a boy and girl figure using clothes, hairstyles and accessories like sunglasses and earrings – a great way to help build imaginative and social play. It's also possible to change the colours of the outfits by drawing on the colour palette.

Incidentally, the control of the palette is excellent. It's sometimes hard to know with art packages what colour has been selected, but as a crayon is chosen it juts out to one side leaving no margin of error.

Paint Box leaves children to their own devices. There are rubber stamps, whacky lines, speaking letters and numbers, and many different textures of paint to experiment with.

The design of the screen is top class, with tools and palette available at either side and scrollable resource material below the masterpiece.

profile

Product	Art Center
Price	£34.99
Format	CD
Supplier	Electronic Arts
Tel	01753 549442

Summary

Try many different kinds of art and craft activities

9

Music Explorer

EXPLORING the sounds different musical instruments make, from pianos to harps, is rarely at the disposal of most State pupils unless they spot a musical gift developed early on in their lives. Music Explorer not only provides this opportunity but encourages Key Stage 1 and 2 kids to produce simple compositions.

Many toddler products, including Europress's Fun School in Dreamland, provide sections where extremely basic nursery rhymes can be composed. The great thing about Music Explorer is that it's possible to start off at an elementary level like this and move through the exercises investigating more complex elements like tempo or musical ranges.

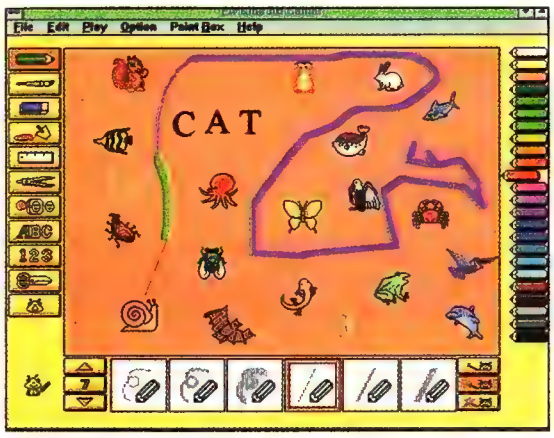
A child who thrives on structure and attention to detail will enjoy working through the composing activities manual, packed with easily broken down instructions on what to do on screen with accompanying diagrams.

Don't be put off by the unassuming black and white presentation. With a product like this it's best to spend as little time as possible reading text, concentrating on actual composition.

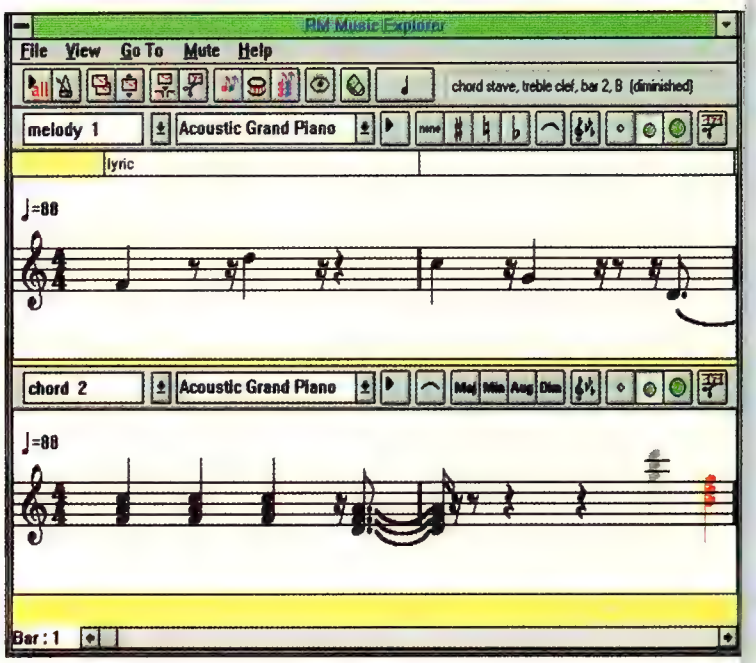
New features are gradually introduced in each of the four colour-banded skill levels. The simplest exercises are yellow, concentrating on the essential tools of composition such as being able to distinguish between long and short notes, melody and rhythm.

One step up to green isn't problematic, comprising features like variable speeds or technical aspects which include learning how to copy bars. It's amazing how many popular songs use this method of composition.

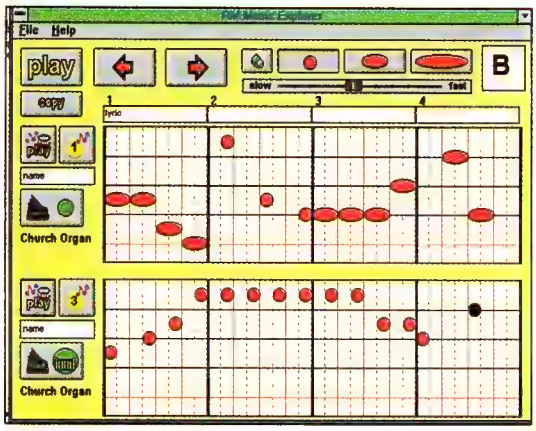
By the time you're ready to contemplate the blue projects, be prepared to compose dances like waltzes and have the old folks at the local home queueing up to hear some new creations. Ah, I can just



Children decide which crayon , lettering or topic to choose



Incorporate more detail and produce sheet music



Work on two different motions at once

visualise that three-beat pulse: *Um – pah – pah – Um – pah – pah.*

Seeing red is usually stressful, but in the case of Music Explorer it means you've made it to composer grade, perhaps listening to existing timings to get ideas, then creating a song of your own and playing it back, printing it up into sheet music for posterity.

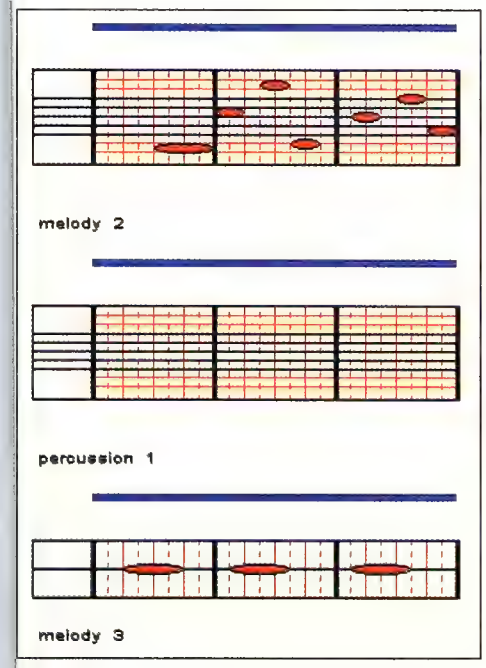
What's appealing in this approach is that the child can either tackle composition in a structural way, building on each new skill and technique, or immediately leap in and refer back through the exercises as a sticking patch emerges.

Music Explorer is as good a way as any for children to gain confidence using computers, as they have to use symbols to generate meaning, and there's a lot of clicking and selecting going on in the drop-down menus.

Parents can often feel excluded from their children's school work what with the introduction of attainment levels, which probably didn't exist when they were at school. The Teacher's Guide looks a bit pompous on the face of it, with rambling sentences and overly technical terms describing the focus of the project at hand. Yet work through and set exercises for the children and the terms become clear.

Take Green Project 3: A Song. AT1 reads: *To create a song – combining music and words together in composition and performance; to create a pentatonic round.* Read through the activities on the same page, and I promise this will make sense to you. Helpful tips follow, like the combination of pentatonic melodic instruments and percussion instruments in performance.

Learning more about notes, staves, and notation in general will help improve the ability of the child to play an instrument, and it's fun to put together composition demonstrations for the whole family to listen to, print off songs for the family members to play on a guitar or piano, or even pedalling your songs to local music stores or friends. ■



Skip back through melodies already in the can

profile

Product	Music Explorer
Price	£116
Format	Floppy
Supplier	RM
Tel	01235 826789

Summary

Composing activities which musicians at all grades can realise

9

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VCI Software

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Multimedia Family PC

SYSTEM SPECIFICATION

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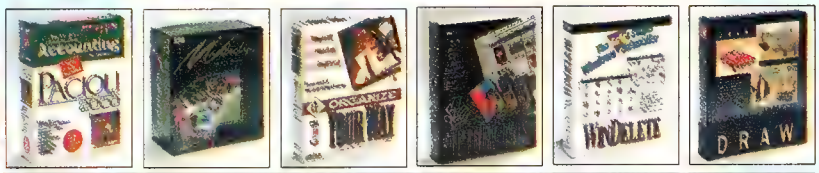

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TMFPC1A

Shopped

Armed with only a clipboard and pen, Adrian Worral puts the goods and services of the High Street to the test

We decided to find out whether or not the standard of advice High Street stores offer is as bad as the professionals suggest. Is it really not possible to go into your local electrical store and get good advice and value for money? With Escom buying up Rumbelows, the traditional outlets have a new boy to contend with, but do they measure up?

To achieve our objectives we sent our masked computer buyer out on the town in the guise of a well presented family man with one small child and minimal computer knowledge.

His brief was simple: With £1,500 to spend and only a basic computer knowledge he was looking for something that would last for a few years, enable him to write letters, bring work back from the office – where he uses Windows – play the odd game, obtain hard copy and run the latest edutainment software.

He may want multimedia but is not sure if it is worth it. He also wants as much free software as possible.

So Adrian Worrall set off to visit Currys at the Peel Centre in Stockport, Dixons in St. Anns Square Manchester, Escom in Levenshulme, PC World in Stretford and Tandy in Macclesfield...

Currys

AFTER wandering around their computer centre for about a minute I was approached by an assistant who told me that he could not help but would get the resident computer expert.

Five minutes later I was greeted by an assistant who had obviously spent several hours reading the sales blurb, but unfortunately he seemed hell bent on selling me a multimedia Packard Bell SX2/50MHz with 4Mb of ram and a 210Mb hard drive for £999.

He told me that this machine would serve all my needs and run Windows 95 without any problems. The reason for the over enthusiastic sales pitch for this machine was that it was no longer produced and was the last one in the shop. I was also advised that it was essential to get a multimedia machine as all the good educational software now comes on CD – almost true.

The alternative machines I was offered were all multimedia. There was a 4Mb DX2/66MHz for £1,399 and a P60 with 8Mb of ram for £1,599 both of which, I was told, came with the standard Packard Bell software pack, the contents of which were a complete mystery.

I was also told that no setup service was available and that all the machines on the market came with Intel inside. He did not explain this or try and sell me any extended guarantee.

I could also add a printer of my choice and get a 25 per cent discount off it. This was the special offer of the moment but he did not tell me how long it would last – so I'd better buy very soon!

To be honest, I shouldn't have been surprised by this encounter. Currys' knowledge of computers is almost legendary.

I did object to being asked to buy a machine that was certainly not powerful enough for what I wanted, and then simply because it was the last of the stock.

As for 4Mb being plenty of ram for Windows 95 – this was just regurgitated Microsoft PR talk. They might get Windows 95 to work in 4Mb of ram but it won't be very satisfactory.

4 RATING

the crunch

FOR the £1,500 price tag, we expected the sales assistants would recommend the following system or better:

486 DX2-50 MHz
8Mb ram
420Mb hard drive
Double-speed CD-Rom drive
16-bit sound card
As much bundled software as possible

Shopped

Dixons

AS this is part of the same company as Currys I was expecting a similar grade of service. The computers available were the same, with the exception of the SX2 which Dixons no longer stocked.

The sales assistant seemed to possess little more computer knowledge than can be gained from the back of the average computer sales leaflet. This was qualified by the frequent use of the phrase: "You should be able to do that".

There seems to be no setup service available and apparently all the machines they sell should be able to fulfil all my needs and be able to run Windows 95 without any problems.

The main sales point at this time seemed to be the software packages available. After much deliberation we decided I would be best served by a DX2/66MHz with 4Mb of ram and a 528Mb hard drive. The cost of this system would be £1,299 and a bubblejet printer would set me back another £249.99 making a grand total of £1,548.99.

I was told at length that the software supplied with the machine was Microsoft Works (the operating system), Moneywise, Lotus Organiser, Encarta, Fine Artist, France, 3D Body Adventure, Space Adventure, Speed Adventure, Undersea Adventure and Cyberia.

This is a very good collection considering my requirements but I was very unimpressed to find out that Microsoft Works was an "operating system" after spending years under the impression that it was a Windows application!

Once I had been lead into choosing a machine that already exceeded my budget I was taken over to the sales counter where two assistants tried their best to sell me over £600 worth of extended Coverplan Insurance which would boost the cost to well over £2,000. If I took advantage of this very comprehensive policy they may have been able to give me a discount that would reduce the total cost to £1,930.

I was recommended a reasonable PC for my needs, and the hard drive was a good size, unlike the option from Currys, but the selling frenzy overtook the salesmen, so that if I'd listened to them I would have spent £500 more than I wanted to.

Escom

THIS was the first of the computer specialists on the trail and you could tell the difference. I was greeted by a female assistant who dragged herself away from a game of Doom on a Pentium and directed me towards a male assistant who would be able to supply me with reliable advice.

This proved to be the case as I was told that it would be an advantage to get a multimedia machine for all the educational software.

There would be no real advantage in having a quad-speed CD-Rom drive if that was all I was going to use it for.

I was also informed that if I was

Tandy

NOW we come to the best of the non-specialist stores. Tandy no longer do their own brand of PC, selling computers from IBM and Compaq.

For some reason the sales person only seemed interested in telling me the merits of the Compaq machines. He advised me that for home use it may be a little excessive to buy a Pentium and it would also stretch my budget a little.

A DX2/66MHz with 8Mb of ram would suit my needs and and I would have no problems with running Windows 95. Price tag, £1,499.99.

The only thing I was advised to buy as an extra was Microsoft Works which would then complete the collection I would need for the immediate future.

All the machines they supply have Intel inside and therefore "there should be no problem with upgrading in the future" – something of a bland generalisation.

In view of my apparent incompetence with computers they would set up the machine in the shop, install all my software on to it and then set up Windows to operate with any printer I might buy.

This was a very tempting offer as it was free and if anything went wrong the shop would put it right. So brownie points to Tandy on the service front.

I was also advised to do a complete hard drive backup which would take 47 floppy disks and could be used to get me out of any future trouble. This is true but, to be honest, if your hard drive fails you may as well re-install everything anyway.

Thumbs up to Tandy for the service and also a willingness not to sell me more power than I needed. However, their choice of PC was quite expensive, though it would be suitable for Windows 95.

going to get Windows 95 I would be better with a machine with a minimum of 8Mb of ram and all their models have Intel Inside. I was also given an Intel booklet explaining the ins and outs of the Pentium processor.

I was advised to get a Pentium P60 with 8Mb of ram and a 540Mb hard drive.

This machine came in at £997.58 but did not have a CD-Rom drive or sound card which could be added for as little as £175.08 bringing the total price to an acceptable £1,172.66.

This package would do everything I asked of it and came with a comprehensive software package including Windows 3.11, OS/2 Warp, OS/2 bonus pack (IBM Works, Internet Super Highway, People-to-People), Lotus SmartSuite for OS/2, CorelDraw V4, Microsoft Works V3, Scenes-Undersea and Entertainment Pack IV.

A full setup and support package was included and extended guarantees were available. I was also told that because it was a Pentium it was fully upgradable.

Full marks to the Escom staff then. Not only did they spec me out with a powerful machine well under my budget that would run Windows 95, they also tried to trim a few pounds off the cost by keeping me away from extra equipment I didn't need.

Good advice, attention to what the customer wants, decent technical knowledge and a desire to save a few quid too – the other High Street stores should look to Escom and buck up their ideas.

where do you go?

ANYBODY possessing little or no computer knowledge should tread very carefully in the High Street. Escom would be the safest bet as their advice was as good as any and their prices were almost as competitive as mail order.

Tandy were a close second if you like Compaq equipment and if you don't want to upgrade anything but your memory or processor in the future. Their setup service was very impressive and the after-sales service seemed as good as anyone's.

As to the rest, I would not buy a machine from any of them unless I knew exactly what I was getting – and the prices came down. Despite trying to improve their standards, the sales staff could do with proper PC training, and I don't mean how to flog the most expensive piece of kit they've got.

PC World

NOW on to the second computer specialist store. After wandering around for five minutes I was finally greeted by a friendly red shirted store assistant.

All started well as I was advised that I needed 8Mb of ram to run Windows 95.

I was also told that all the latest educational software was coming out on CD and I would need a multimedia PC to take full advantage of the video and sound.

I was also assured that their PCs would handle all my requirements and more and should give me years of good service and upgradability as all of their models have Intel inside.

The software package was the same standard Packard Bell software which is a good selection of productivity and educational software as demonstrated by both Dixons and Currys.

The good start was short lived, for he next tried his best to convince me that I would be a fool to buy anything less than a Packard Bell P60 with 8Mb of ram for £1,702.

"But sir you do get a free BJ200 printer and if you want the colour version it will only cost you an extra £100". With the pushy sell and familiar surroundings I could have sworn I was in Dixons or Currys – well they are all part of the same chain.

The advantage of going to PC World is that within one store you can pick up everything you could ever want, from a computer desk and monitor stand to a mouse mat or small piece of software.

The disadvantage is that you may get home and find that you've spent hundreds of pounds on a pile of kit you will never use.

Once again, they were far too willing to get me to spend well beyond my budget, on a machine that is admittedly a powerful one, but which is vastly overpriced. ■

If you have the facility, always try to pay for any equipment using a credit card

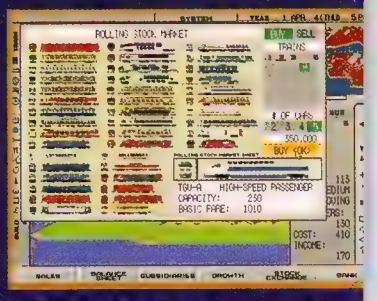
INFOGRAMES

NETW

THE BUCKS START HERE.

PC & PC CD ROM

"... a strong contender for simulation of the year... This game is going to be big." PC REVIE



©1995 Infogrames

A hyper-realistic simulation of Global proportion

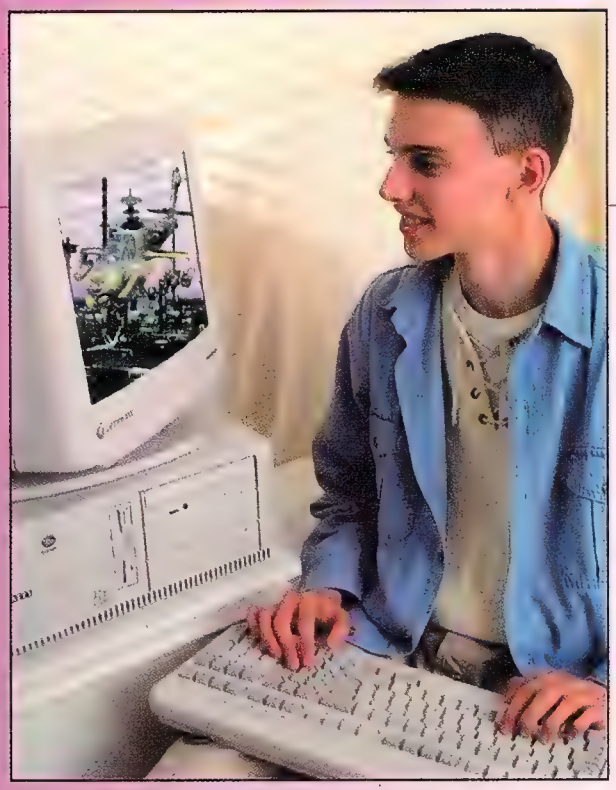
stakes couldn't be higher. Dwight Owen Barnes, President of the V Corporation is missing presumed dead. The search is on for his cessor - and your name's on the shortlist.
ou can prove your business acumen in a variety of economic d political situations, the top job at the world's third largest glomerate is yours.

You can speculate on the stock market, invest in property and take over your rivals - hell you can even build entire cites from scratch! You'll have advisers to help you but ultimately the buck stops with you. Every single decision you make will make you millions or cost you a fortune.

LUS using codes from the game you can enter your best score for the IV Network$ Worldwide Competition. The UK winner will get £1,500 orth of travel vouchers and a trip to the world final. There are runner-up prizes mobile phones, electronic organisers and financial calculators but the world ampion will win a year's study of their choice.

Infogrames Ltd. 14 Smedley Street, Clapham, London, SW4 6PF. 0171-738 8199

the games room



contents

games ratings

THE policy at PC Home is to review and score every game that comes in to the office irrespective of its quality.

Any game scoring 90% or over is a guaranteed must buy. Over 80% and it comes highly recommended.

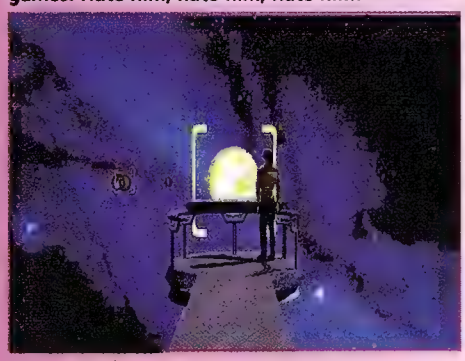
Around 70% is one that will appeal to certain groups but not a wider audience.

60% is good but not an essential buy and anything around 50% is just plain average. Below 40% and it's a real turkey.

features

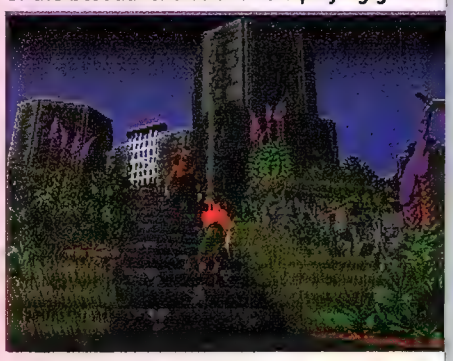
E3 show report 88

Pete Hawley gets all the good jobs round here. Swanning off to the States for a couple of weeks every month, playing all the latest games. Hate him, hate him, hate him!



Top 10 adventures 11

Andy Shaw gets all the naff jobs round here – he's the only person who can finish them on time. This month we made him hunt down 10 of the best adventure and role-playing games



reviews

Chaos Control 96

74% Sounds like a magazine publishing simulation, but it's nothing so exciting unfortunately. Rob Smith does battle with some particularly dull alien invaders.

Loadstar 98

25% Lance Concannon reviews the lowest scoring game of the month. It's because he's still bitter and resentful about never being allowed to have a puppy when he was a child.

Power House 99

73% Everybody wants to take over the world this month – must be something to do with the warm weather making them all frisky. Keith Maton goes for global domination.

FX Fighter 100

85% Unable to express himself properly through traditional mediums such as the written word, Lance Concannon resorts to beating seven shades of spam out of people.

Alex Dampier Pro Hockey 95 102

71% Don't know who this Alex Dampy bloke is, but hockey's a girl's game if you ask us. However, Darren Allan thinks different and he's got a big wooden stick.

Kingdom 106

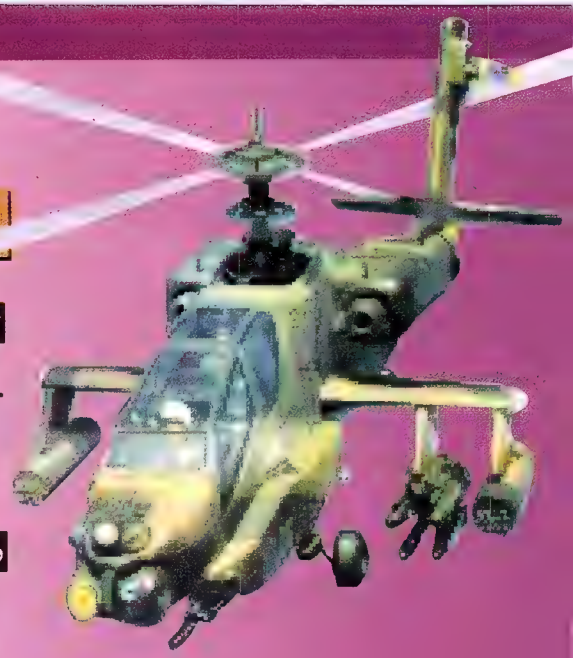
84% Power-crazed Kerry Culbert wants build her own mighty kingdom so she can command her minions to invade Cornwall and hold the world's pastie supply to ransom.

Prisoner of Ice 110

74% Rob Smith gets taken prisoner by an evil ice cream baron. He must find a way to escape the underground complex or face an eternity of Low Fat Minty Choc-chip.

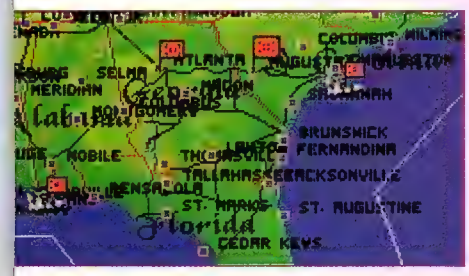
Machiavelli: The Prince 113

85% He ruled with an iron fist, murdering all who stood in his way, torturing those who questioned his word. But enough of editor Duncan Evans, Mark Ulyatt is your reviewer.



Civil War

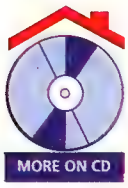
game of the month 104



Civil War 104

86% No Roundheads or Cavaliers in this game, just Yankees and people with silly accents in Empire's excellent strategic simulation of the American Civil War. Programmed by the same team who wrote Field of Glory, it offers 3-D battlefield graphics and a comprehensive control system.

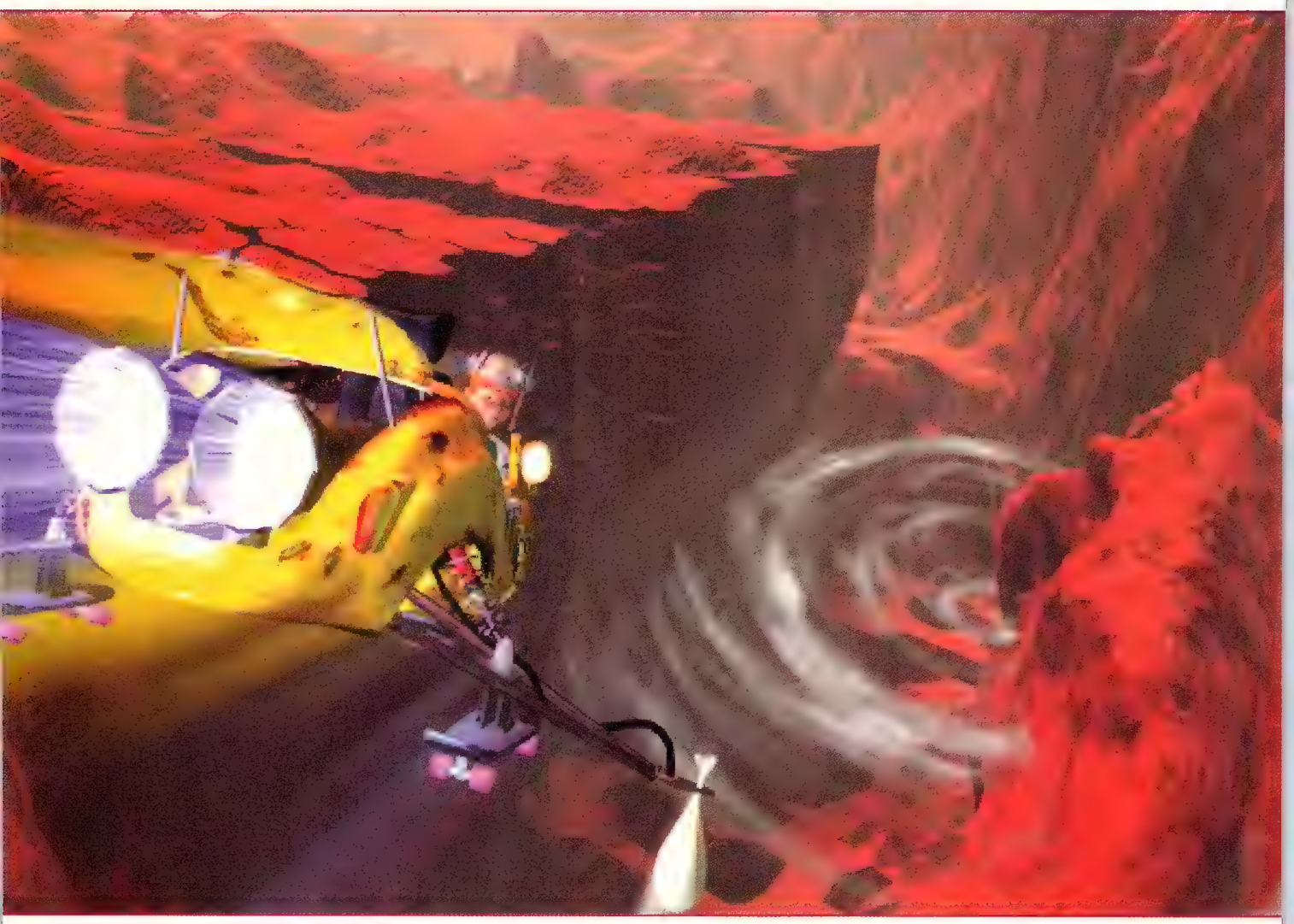
Rob Smith whistles Dixie and helps shape the greatest nation on earth – with the possible exception of good old Blighty, of course.



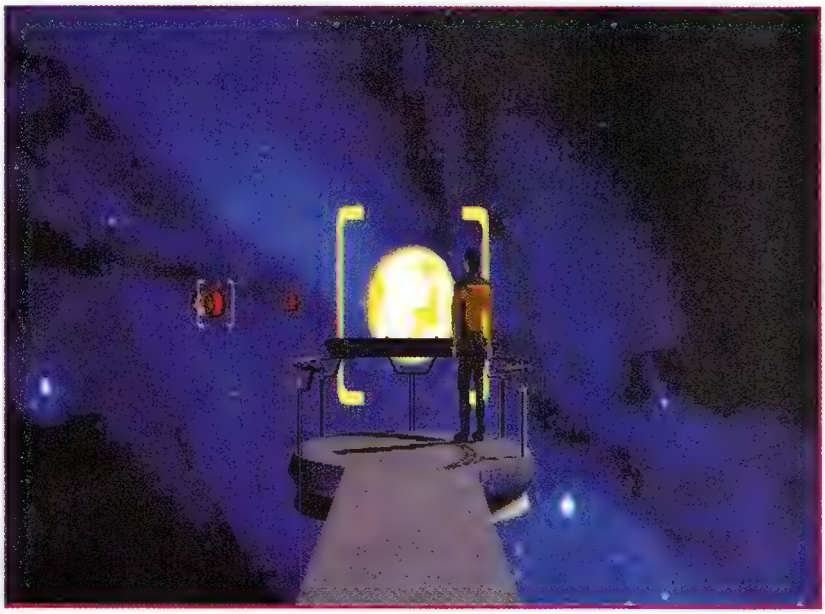
E3

Globe-trotting games editor Pete Hawley has been to America again, this time to visit the world's largest game expo

Electronic



▲ Soon to crash-land on a desert near you, the outstanding Heart of Darkness from Virgin Interactive



The next in the Star Trek series from Microprose – Generations, based around the film

Screamer, Virgin's answer to Ridge Racer, burning rubber to a PC near you soon

Entertainment Expo

AFTER the excitement of the Las Vegas CES, in January the only thing left to get all hot, sticky and bothered about this year was the Electronic Entertainment Expo in Los Angeles, or E3 to trendy people. Its size was incredible, especially when you take into consideration that this was the first.

The problem in the past with the CES show, was the fact that most of the convention space was devoted to all manner of electrical consumer goods and not just software. As a result PC journalists spent most of their time walking over 20 miles a day just to find the stands and displays they were interested in.

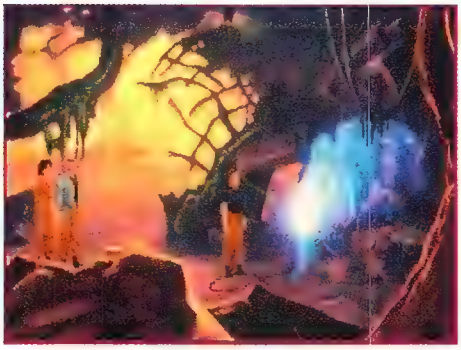
Here you'll find the major new releases announced at the show plus all the late breaking news. Why not browse through the interactive E3 guide on the cover CD? There isn't enough space in the mag to print all the info and screenshots I obtained from the show so take a closer look at the screens on the disc.

Virgin Interactive

FIRST stop for me at the show was Virgin Interactive Entertainment. As I've come to expect from their stands at trade shows there was a huge display of pre-release games and animations including a back room dedicated to the breathtaking **Heart of Darkness**. There was also the usual spread of new launches and announcements.

First up is **Toon Struck**, an animated point and click adventure using state-of-the-art cartoon animations and characters also starring that incredibly strange bloke, Christopher Lloyd, he of Taxi and Back to the Future fame.

Lloyd has spent some time at the Virgin studios in Irvine, California filming his



The Dig – LucasArts' space-bound adventure

sequences for the guys to include within the game. With voice overs by Tim Curry to add a little spice to the proceedings, it's shaping up into a really impressive cartoon adventure with bags of humour and cartoon violence. What more could you ask for?

Fans of the rather splendid money swallowers, Ridge Racer and Daytona, can look forward to the latest racing game from Virgin entitled **Screamer**. It was running at the show and sparked some considerable interest.

It runs fast, it's loud and it's dangerous like a good racing game should be – good timing from Virgin as the PC looks forward to the fast approaching competition from the Sega Saturn and the Sony Playstation consoles.

Pinball fans should keep their eyes out for **Tilt,** a new pinball blast due in September and warheads should watch out for **Command and Conquer**. It's on the way from Westwood and looks infinitely better than Dune 2 although the idea is the same – armies of small fellows taking on the might of other armies with a massive variety of weapons, units, strategies and tactics. Look for the review soon.

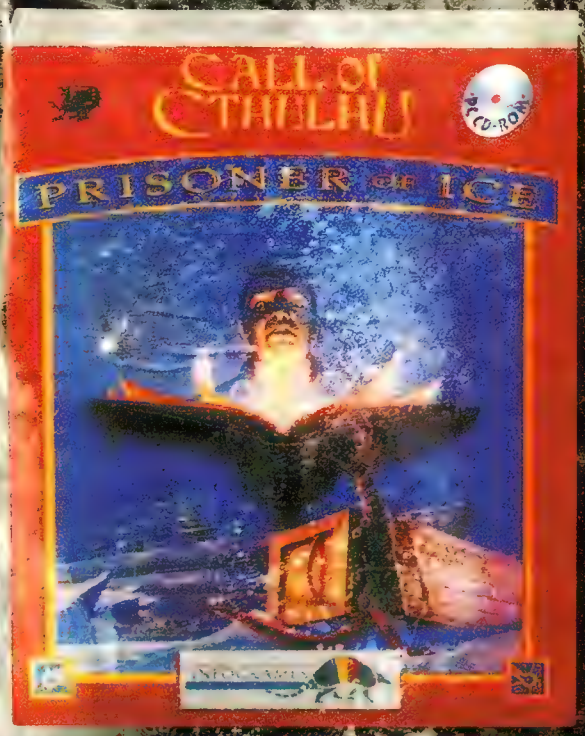
Spike from Virgin's cartoon adventure,Toon Struck

CHILLING...

90% Game Pro -
"top quality adventure"

89% PC Games -
"gripping - wouldn't hesitate to recommend it"

PC Zone Recommended -
"Infogrames' best adventure to date
- Watch out LucasArts"



PC Review -
"gorgeous - best in the genre..."

C & VG Hit 91% -
"a really well-planned adventure"

PC Attack -
"What a game - huge, beautiful, atmospheric and stuffed with head

PRISONER OF ICE

CD ROM

Monsters, magic, spies and the supernatural collide in this graphic, time-travel adventure that will make your blood run cold.

The non-stop action moves from a secret Nazi base in the South Pole to a Royal Navy Submarine, from the Falklands to Buenos Aires and beyond.

In chilling 3D detail the terrors seem all too real and, as the nightmare unfolds, only the coolest survive!

Prisoner Of Ice - The first ever adventure game to use "Motion Capture" for all character rendering is in the chiller cabinet at all good game stockists now.

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E3

LucasArts

LUCASARTS were displaying their wares separately from VIE on a more modest stand but as usual there was no lack of people surrounding it, all clambering for the first look at **Rebel Assault 2**.

Spielberg's **The Dig** was coming along nicely and should be finished in time for a Christmas launch despite the connection with the man not being as strong as it was at the start of the project.

A surprise announcement at the show from the Lucas ranch was **Calia 2095** a cartoon adventure that looks completely different from the classic point and click we're familiar with. Details of the gameplay are a little sketchy at the moment, but if their past record is anything to go by, we shouldn't be too disappointed.

More huge displays were evident as I made my way over to the Spectrum Holobyte/ Microprose stand. **Star Trek TNG** was the product of the show as far as Spectrum were concerned and most of the monitors were buzzing away with the antics of Mr Picard and friends.

The next episode in the Star Trek series will be **Generations**. It has a very similar look and feel to A Final Unity but with many enhancements, including a Doom style get off the ship and blast the living spacedust out of Klingons bit. It's an all new story and underlying plot that will follow the film loosely, which can't be a bad thing seeing as the film was a tad poor.

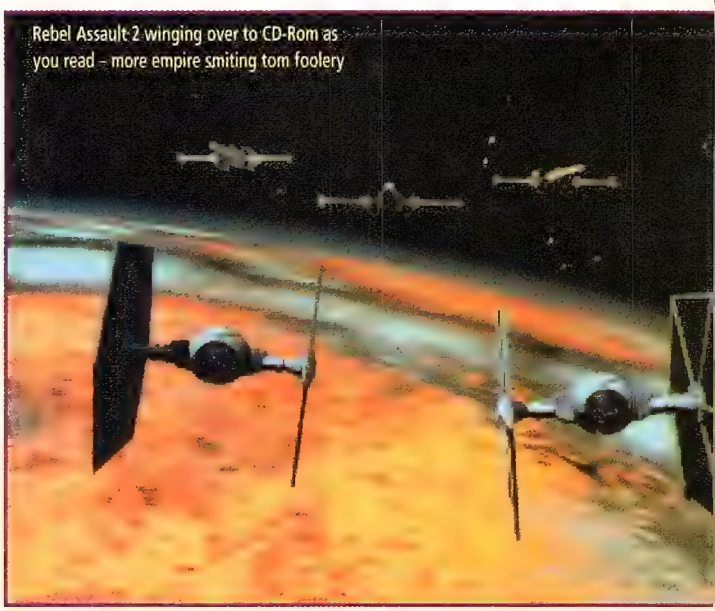
Animated adventure in LucasArts' new Calia 2095

Not content with the long awaited Formula One Grand Prix 2, Microprose are also releasing two other rubber burners in '95. The first, **Virtual Karts**, is another kart sim that will include racing through city streets as well as the usual fast race circuits.

The release of F1GP2 will be closely followed by **Super Bike**, a Grand Prix bike sim using the same engine that will include all the features you'd see at a normal race weekend – leather trousers, shiny helmets and hot pipes.

If that wasn't enough, role players can look forward to the PC translation of the hugely successful fantasy card game, **Magic the Gathering**.

Wizards of the Coast, the company who created the game, were quite taken aback by its success – it has now sold over a billion cards in the US alone. With the recent Duellists convention in Birmingham, UK, Magic's popularity is on the increase here too. Look to the shelves around September.



Rebel Assault 2 winging over to CD-Rom as you read – more empire smiting tom foolery

Grand Pix 2 from Microprose will be burning up your screen in September

new for 95

IN among the new releases are a few titles already earmarked as Windows 95 launches. Activision are one of the companies to develop games under Microsoft's new operating system, the first of which will be **Pitfall** the old classic platformer that recently saw newer conversions on the numerous console platforms.

Activision's long awaited **Mech Warrior 2** gets ever closer to a release and looked pretty finished to me. Over the last year it has undergone something of a facelift, mainly due to huge similarities to Earthsiege from Dynamix, and now looks completely different – a virtual cockpit, more detail on the warriors themselves, a whole new arsenal of heavy weaponry and a lean towards more involvement in a plot.

After blasting away at some oversized robot warriors it was time to go and visit our friends at id Software. These guys obviously need no introduction as the creators Doom. But what about **Quake** and when is it going to hit the ftp sites?

Well everything is running according to schedule, Jay Wilbur told me but although I was able to see the game running it was very basic and I'm not allowed to print screen shots but as soon as they're available they'll be winging their way over the Atlantic to my e-mail address. So hold on to your hats and let's just say you won't be too upset with their efforts.

Of course there is **Ultimate Doom** mentioned in last month's news which is basically the original Doom v1.9 plus a new chapter in the tale entitled: Thy Flesh Consumed. Sounds like a fun trip out for all the family.

The levels are harder and well designed but I was a little disappointed it wasn't Doom II. None of the new monsters or the Super Shotgun are available which will mean an absence of single shot death blows for deathmatch fiends.

There was very little mention of **Strife** from Cygnus Studios who are also using the Doom engine to develop a new first-person blast fest.

funny rubber suits

AMONG the stands were many strange people dressed in enormous foam suits mimicking a number of famous game characters and creatures – from Earthworm Jim, a seven foot Cookie Monster to a number of very small bald people promoting the launch of Gametek's new strategy game, **Baldies.**

It looks like fun as it's very similar in appearance to Settlers in game style, but bears more of a resemblance to Lemmings with the puzzle aspect.

US Gold developers Bethesda are working on

Duke Nukem 3-D – more network fun for 11 players

Crusader: The leather-clad hero on a mission to kill, maim and generally upset people with his gun

a number of new titles after the disappointment of Delta V. The most impressive of these are **10th Planet, XCar** and **Terminator: Future Shock**. More on these titles as additional info becomes available.

Apogee are another recent US Gold signing and no doubt will prove to be a profitable acquisition as they work on their various projects. Well established as shareware game supremos, George Broussard and friends in Dallas have already had success this year with Rise of the Triad and their up-and-coming 3-D release with co-developers, **3-D Realms**, looks very impressive and generated huge interest.

For 18 months people have tried desperately to beat Doom at its own game – death and destruction. In my opinion no one has come close, but Apogee are going to have a good go.

Their new titles, **Duke Nukem 3-D**, **Blood and Shadow Warrior**, will allow multi-level buildings and an almost infinite number of network options. Including booby traps, mines, bombs and an option to record and play your games back from a variety of camera angles.

Electronic Arts

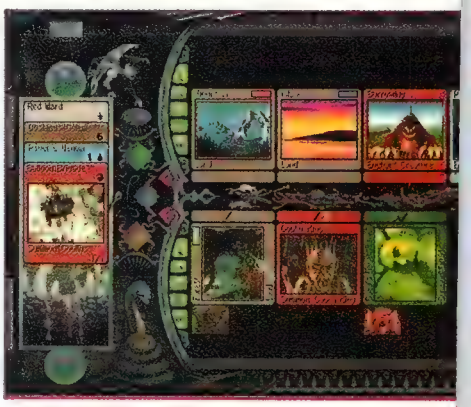
ELECTRONIC Arts have a number of impressive world leading game developers under their belt and with the recent purchase of Bullfrog they can only go from strength to strength. So what do we have here? – Origin, Bullfrog, Delphine and the impressive sports range.

Two new titles from Origin, **Crusader** and **Cybermage**, are certainly a change of direction for the Texans who are well known for their investment in quality software and pushing the PC as far as it will go, specification wise.

Cybermage is a first-person, interactive adventure for want of a better description. It uses a Doom-style engine to navigate the game world but it isn't just blasting and maiming innocent braindead creatures. It features characters that you can interact with and squeeze information from.

Crusader is a very impressive SVGA wander and blast 3-D adventure. Take control of a violent, over aggressive hero in a tight red costume, and make your way through the enemy base blasting and maiming its occupants with a variety of personal weaponry.

On a lighter note **Fifa '96** is on the way and looks completely different from the original. If any of you have been lucky enough to see the



Magic the Gathering, the magical card game from Wizards of the Coast adapted to PC by Microprose

3DO version you'll have a good idea of what to expect – a 3-D pitch with panning and zooming camera angles, full running commentary off the CD plus a SVGA option.

Moving along the EA stand a little I was overwhelmed by the number of Bullfrog games on display because the masters from Surrey have more than their usual amount of software ready for release over the coming year.

Nothing incredibly new apart from further developments on titles we already know about. My Incredible SuperHero Team is now called **Indestructibles** – more on that title later .

Biosphere has been renamed **Gene Wars** and **Creation, Theme Hospital, Dungeon Keeper, Magic Carpet 2** and the rather splendid surprise announcement **High Octane** are all in development and coming along on schedule. Play the demo on the CD to see why it's taken some network time during our dinner hour.

Bethesda's Xcar is due fourth quarter

The tanks that fought across Europe in the largest clash of armour ever seen and the brave crews who manned them - this is their story

MAKE IT YOURS

Control a single platoon, company or an entire battalion. Fight a single battle or a decisive campaign from either the Allied or German perspective.

1944

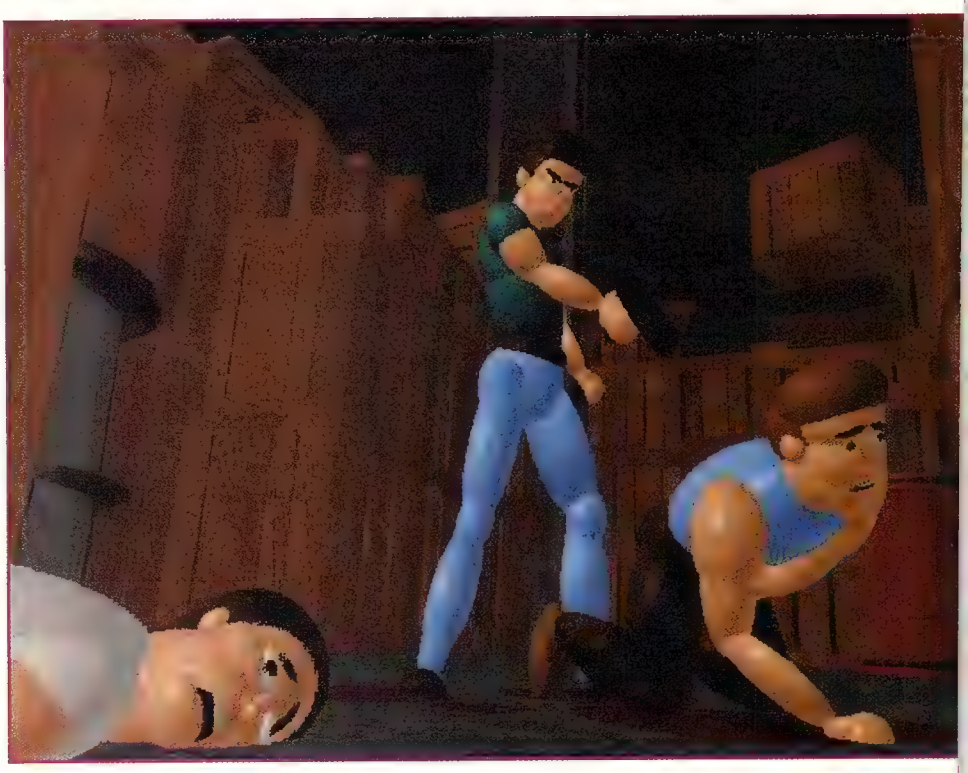
ACROSS THE RHINE

The game that puts you in command of the classic armoured battles of Western Europe. As real as armoured warfare simulation can get.

MICROPROSE

FOR IBM PC CD-ROM

The Need for Speed from Electronic Arts – coming soon



Urban Decay: Not content with killing this guy's mate, it's time for head shot followed by a few rounds for good luck

The PSX version of Demolition Derby. Another death race coming to the PC fourth quarter

Sony's cronies

ONE of the finest games last year in my opinion was Ecstatica from Psygnosis. It featured incredible animation, a very adult theme and more blood and nastiness you can shake a stick at. Well, the team responsible are currently working on the follow up, **Urban Decay**, which was one of the most talked about games of the show.

Set in the dark slums of a run down city the new hero of the game is a gun toting, T-shirt and jeans wearing death dealer. I've never seen a higher level of violence and blood shed in my life (and Pete lives in Manchester – Ed).

Watch out for head shots, enemies choking on their own blood just before they receive another fatal shot to the head and helpless bad guys crawling away with critical stomach wounds before they too get peppered with more lead slugs. You get the picture.

Lemmings 3-D is another demo on this month's CD and as you will see it's a completely different slant on the usual puzzling and frustrating antics of the small cuties with green hair: A 3-D environment, interactive scenery and more annoying Lemming culls.

INXS

MULTIPLAYER games are still flavour of the month and will no doubt continue to be. Despite a plethora of network games hitting the shelves nothing has really come close to Doom in terms of gameplay, feel and violence level. But more combat arena scenarios are on the way from Sales Curve Interactive. **XS: Shield up and Fight Back**, as it is affectionately known, is another networkable combat game but with a different slant.

You take to a 3-D arena armed with a variety of weapons. The idea is to take out the other players in the same area. The players throw up their shields and take to the challenge by laying booby traps, finding hidey hole and generally being the most devious and malicious warrior in town. ■

Impressive

ONE of the most visually impressive games at the show was an unsigned one from American developers, Scavenger, called **Into the Shadows**. It features a full, 3-D environment running in twice the resolution of Doom and incorporates real-time light sourcing.

The action takes place in a cold dark dungeon and you control the moves and destiny of a knight in shining armour from an out-of-body perspective similar to Alone in the Dark but with zooming and panning camera angles.

The plot is very sketchy at the moment but it certainly looks amazing. Screen shots next month.

Well that more or less sums up the E3 extravaganza and the numerous companies strutting their stuff.

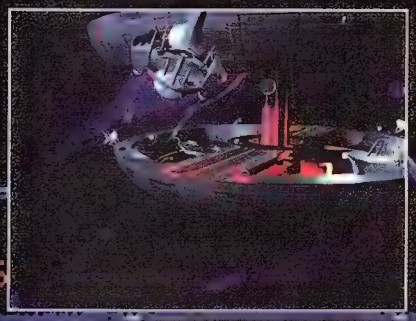
There are, no doubt, a few titles I've missed in this summary but news of them and other games will be covered in PC Home over the coming months.

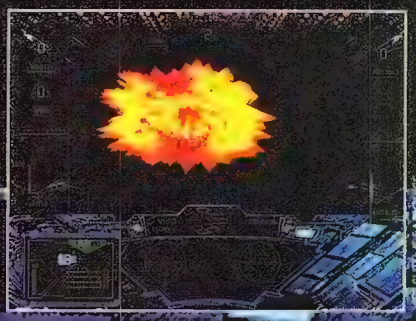
THE LAST DYNASTY

Buy The Last Dynasty
and get another game FREE ! *

Released JUNE 29TH
Multimedia PC Windows (2 CD's)

f this is an indication of things to come
om the new multimedia revolution, Sierra might just have cracked ICZONE





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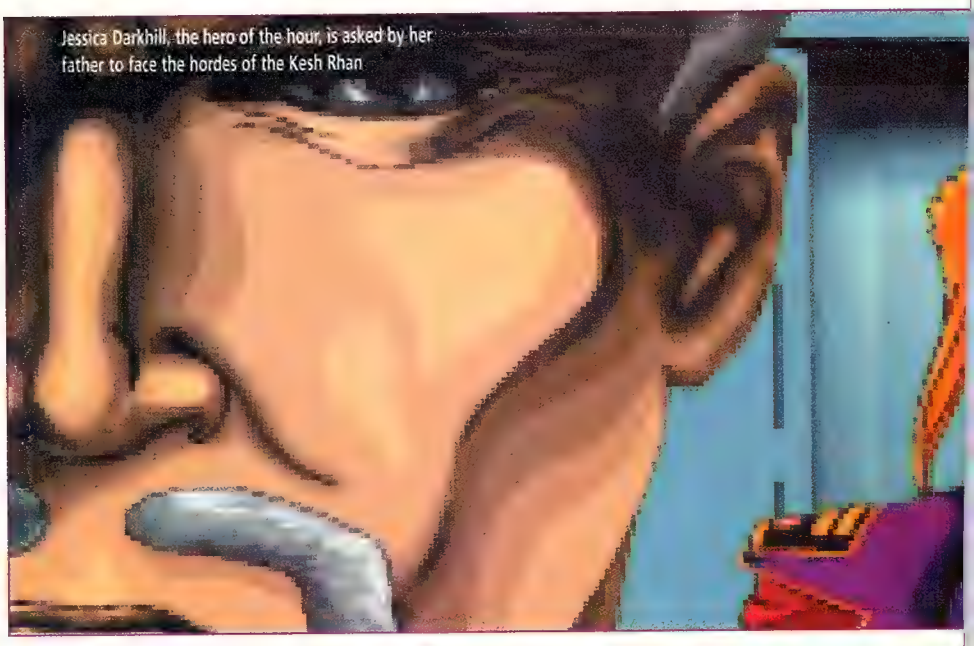


Jessica Darkhill, the hero of the hour, is asked by her father to face the hordes of the Kesh Rhan

Chaos Control

Rob Smith tests out his reflexes in the latest shoot-'em-up from Infogrames

PIONEER 10, an inter-planetary probe, launched from Earth in 1972, was intended as a purely scientific study of the solar system. As was standard for the time a detailed drawing of humans and also the location of the Earth in the solar system was attached. The reason? So that any alien lifeform encountered could see what we looked like and then decide if they fancied paying a visit.

Progress to the year 2050. Pioneer 10 has long since disappeared into the far reaches of space when, all of a sudden, it stops transmitting. Being nearly 80 years old and who knows where in the universe, the scientists monitoring the transmissions naturally put this down to a malfunction.

One thing that doesn't cross the minds of those scientists is that the probe could be intercepted by a race of alien beings who like the look of this planet Earth and, co-ordinates in hand, deem it necessary to destroy everyone living there.

frantic panic

THIS is a pity since this is exactly what happens. One serious oversight later and those same scientists are frantically panicking about the emergence of an alien mothership harbouring all the fighters needed to conquer Earth's limited defences.

In the outer reaches of the solar system, Mars to be precise, a battle has already been fought by the humans against this aggressive race. The result – Humans 0 Aliens (the Kesh Rhan) 1.

This warm up fight gets the insectoid aliens ready for the final eliminator against the human race. Heroes are needed – pilots who not only possess great reflexes, but are outstanding strategists to boot.

Lieutenant Jessica Darkhill is duly summoned by the commander-in-chief of Earth's defences. In a neat twist designed to add a little family flavour to the story, he just happens to be Jessica's pop, Commander Darkhill. It's one of those dirty jobs but war is war and Earth needs the best so father duly dispatches daughter to face the wrath of the Kesh Rhan invasion fleet.

And so the game begins. Lieutenant Jessica Darkhill, one of the very few female lead game characters, leads the fight beginning in The Battery, New York, flying around the Statue of Liberty.

Chaos Control is a shoot-'em-up in the style of Rebel Assault and Cyberia. Basically what that means is that there is no plane, ship or vehicle to control. The computer sets about flying on a set path and it is your task to shoot everything that moves.

Rapid reflexes and hand/eye co-ordination

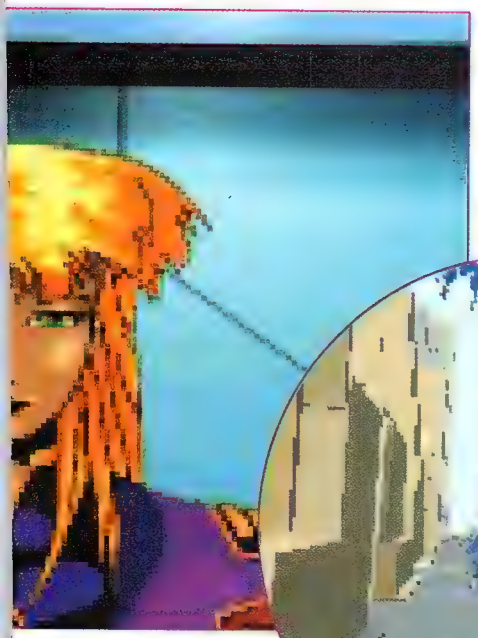
▲ The superbly rendered Statue of Liberty being swarmed over by insectoid aliens

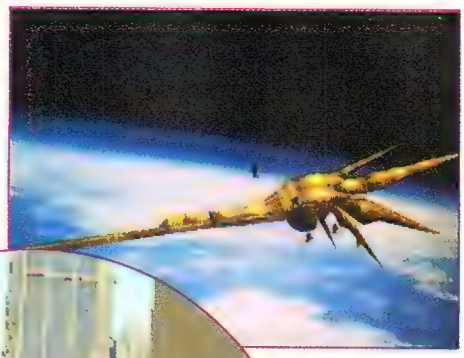
FACT FILE

Chaos Control
Infogrames
0171-738 8199
£39.99
CD-Rom

REQUIREMENTS

486 4Mb 0Mb





A sleek alien mothership prepares to unleash its load of invaders on poor planet Earth

Zoom through the streets shooting tanks and blue guys

The strange world of the Kesh Rhan visualised in impressive style

Insectoid masses fly into the face of oblivion courtesy of a few well aimed shots

are needed to zip the mouse around the screen, pressing the buttons like billyho as the cursor sight turns red indicating targeting on an enemy. Really, that's all there is to it. There are no other controls, just mouse and finger.

So what does Chaos Control offer to make up for gameplay which is, well, to be fair, a little limited? Breathtaking graphics and an aural cacophany of music and sound effects with some amazingly drawn cut sequences and animations. Basically.

The introduction, which lasts a few minutes, sets out the background to the story. The characters are depicted in a familiar cartoon style which owes something to Japanese animation.

Inbetween the discussions, which serve to create a sense of involvement and interest in the plot, cut sequences depict the futuristic cities of the year 2050 with sci-fi craft flying past enormous skyscrapers.

The fly past over the Statue of Liberty is one of the most impressive openings I've seen in any game. Combined with a level of detail in the 3-D alien vessels this provides a quite intense blasting experience.

Naturally with a game of Chaos Control's simplicity it is extremely easy to get into. Before long the mouse will be shooting across the pad as swarms of insectoid invaders are spelled.

Four sections make up the overall challenge against the Kesh Rhan. The initial battle erupts in, over and through the streets of Manhattan where alien warriors have made significant headway. This is split into three sections which simply provides a break from the finger-aching activity of destroying the marauding hordes.

One of the definite advantages of not having to control a vehicle is that it performs some mighty nifty manoeuvres. Swerving, sweeping and swooping through the streets, fitting down gaps barely wide enough and bombing along at ground level really enhances the feeling of speed and exhilaration.

To add a little more gameplay, this initial section features a few allies on the ground. It's not a good idea to shoot at these, but the term friendly fire accident may appear on a number of reports submitted.

friend or foe?

THE action gets so frenetic that distinguishing between friendly and enemy forces is all but impossible. Casaulties of war, I suppose. In game terms, points are deducted for destroying allied forces while enemies range in points value depending on difficulty.

From the streets of Manhattan the action moves to a computer where Jessica Darkhill, now promoted to the rank of Major, is connected to the system where she has to fight computer viruses.

It's all set out in the manner of computer innards with a scene from old sci-fi movie Tron being the nearest likeness. It also gets mighty tough with the three sections culminating in a massive battle against an end-of-level virus.

Level three sits Jessica at the controls of a new prototype fighter facing the bulk of the Kesh Rhan fleet. Survive this and she faces a booby-trapped labyrinth on a mission to a final encounter with the alien mother ship.

While the cut scenes, graphics, sound and animation are all superb, it still cannot hide a shoot-'em-up trying desperately to create a sense of involvement in a bigger plot than the familiar destroy all the bad guys. Another plus point is the fact that it runs straight from CD, requiring just a few bytes hard drive space to save high scores.

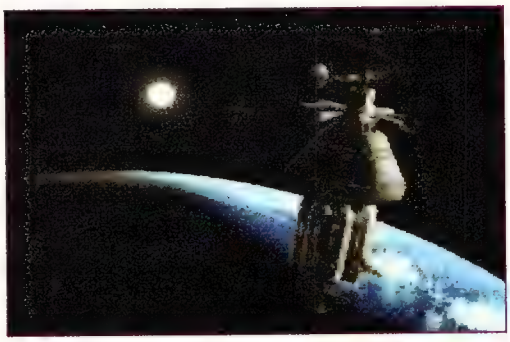
Negative points include the limited sound options which mean the sound card either configures automatically or you go with no sound at all. Also, with a double-speed CD drive and 4Mb of ram some of the animations may pause occasionally or be jerky, but that's the kind of thing we've come to expect these days.

Fortunately, on reaching a new level, a continue option becomes active meaning that when Jessica dies you don't have to go through all the first sections again – until the machine is switched off, of course.

But while that avoids getting bored by endless repeats of the same level it makes completing the game a little easier. I'd estimate a decent standard games player could complete it after about a week, possibly two. Even an advanced level doesn't really help as the flight path through the levels is still the same. Is that really what you expect for £45?

Chaos Control offers such tremendous presentation that it's just a shame about the limited gameplay. This is a feature of the genre rather than this particular game, but really puts a dent in a challenge with the looks of a supermodel. ■

There are some superb graphics sequences in the form of digitised film footage



Loadstar

Never truly at home in the high profile world of computer journalism, Lance Concannon tries out a career in the haulage industry

This picture of your ship's on-board computer looks suspiciously like Bob, Microsoft's shiny happy family interface

Aaaarrggghhh! Look out, there's a giant robot police thingy right ahead! And you though the M25 was a pain

BREAKER breaker, ten four for a rubber ducky, bear in the air, respect due, oo-er missus, my word what an ugly baby. Trucker speak, what does it all mean, how did it evolve and does anybody really care? All I know is that my mum used to have a lot of friends (ahem) of the lorry driving variety and none of them ever really spoke like that, except for one who'd decided to become a trucker after seeing Convoy at the pictures.

The reason for all this freight related nonsense? Well, as you've probably deduced by now, Loadstar is quite possibly the first ever truck driving simulation. Except this is no ordinary truck, no siree bob, this trucking sim is set in the future where everybody drives around on rails, just like trains.

You play the part of one Tully Bodine, a truck driver who for naff plot-related reasons has to drag a crateful of stuff from point A to point Z via the remaining 24 letters of the alphabet.

Unfortunately, for various other plot reasons the blokes in charge don't want Tully to complete his assignment, so they've sent a horde of armed robot traffic cops to stop him.

The good news is that, in the future, all lorries come fitted with laser cannons and force-fields which make it easier for them to barge other vehicles off the road.

These optional extras also come in quite handy for taking care of the aforementioned robo-rozzers, which forms the core of Loadstar's gameplay.

Nearly all the action involves frantically waving the gun sights across your screen and randomly stabbing at the mouse button just in case they accidentally cross the path of a bad guy.

Apart from this the only other interaction involves the occasional decision to turn left or right when the tracks fork and honking your horn every now and then to encourage other vehicles to get out of the way. Just in case even these simple decisions are too much for you to cope with alone, your truck also features a typical sci-fi B movie cutesy computer that warns you of obstacles and sporadically offers pieces of completely useless advice.

The game is broken up into several sections, in each of which you have an ultimate destination to reach. A heading indicator displays the direction in which you should be travelling and all you have to do is decide whether to go left or right whenever a junction appears.

Pick the wrong direction and you end up going round in circles until you take the correct turnoff. What this all boils down to is a pretty pathetic excuse for gameplay which invariably leads to frustration, followed inevitably by ultimate disappointment.

Loadstar does, however, benefit from one saving grace – its superlative graphics. Rather than using traditional computer generated graphics BMG have opted for digitised film footage with live actors and models.

They've also developed technology which allows them to run full-screen video at very respectable speeds without the need for an MPEG card.

There is, of course, a certain degree of resolution payoff, but the overall effect seems to work fairly well. The only problem is that in cut sequences any characters standing too far away from the camera are reduced to multicoloured blobs.

The graphics are very slick but there's very little in the way of gameplay and, quite frankly I found it rather boring. ■

FACT FILE

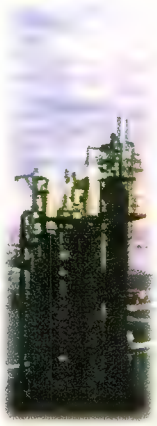
Loadstar
BMG
0171-973 0011
£34.99
CD-Rom

REQUIREMENTS

486 | 4Mb | 1Mb

PowerHouse

Is it possible to produce power for the world and be ecologically sound? Keith Maton investigates



ON the not-too-distant future, it seems that the world will not be controlled by heads of state, but heads of industry. These conglomorates will have one aim: To provide power to the world and make vast profits in the process. But can they do it without destroying the ecosystem?

That's the problem facing you when you take up the challenge to be one of these super powers. You have to create an empire using all of the world's resources.

Nine types of energy are available – oil, gas, coal, nuclear power or the more eco-friendly hydro-electric, solar, wind, geothermal and wave. They all have an effect on the environment in some way or another. In fact it's a case of the more efficient a producer of energy, the more damaging it is.

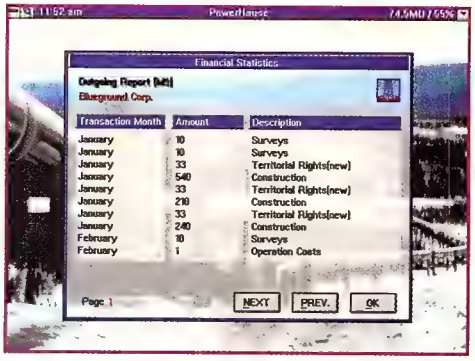
Assigning the survey team to look for geo-thermal opportunities

Don't expect to be able to play a quick game here. This is a detailed sim with a lot of depth. You start with a clean planet in Western America and the first thing you need to do is survey the area. It's vital to have good information before investing money in projects with low or even no returns. You can be sure that the other three mega-corporations are surveying with great efficiency and will jump in and make the most of your shortfalls.

Once you've decided which energy source to use first, you can negotiate for rights to develop a power station. Bear in mind that the coal mine may create employment and produce a high yield, but it's damaging to the environment, whereas wave power is more ecologically sound but produces far less power.

Connections are important. It is not enough just to build a power station – you have to deliver the energy or it is wasted. You must run pipes to connect oil wells and refineries, and transformers to move the power to where it is needed. Without this, a box appears before the end of your turn and reminds you.

The United Nations control the release of each area for development and you are not allowed even to survey a region until they give the go-ahead. In practice, this means that the existing territory must be supplied with minimum power requirements. Ultimately, one company will survive the battle and become controller of the world's resources.



Keep out of the red and in the black – haven't I heard that somewhere before?

PowerHouse is Windows-based and will not run in more than 256 colours. The first time it's loaded, it runs a series of video tests to set up the graphics for optimum performance. Video clips are an integral part of the game and take the form of news bulletins, giving information of oil rig disasters and other such hazards.

The introduction sequence is interesting, but can't be bypassed when you restart, which is a shame. It's not too long, but it would be nice to be able to skip through to the main menu.

The main screen is comprehensive and has a large range of options. You need the manual to remind yourself of which button does what and I feel that some sort of balloon help would be useful here.

Playing the game is challenging and engrossing, but there is quite a long wait for the computer to make the other players' moves. All in all, this is an adequate, if not earth-shattering god game. ■

FACT FILE

PowerHouse
Daze
0171-372 7435
£39.95
CD-Rom

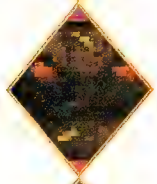
REQUIREMENTS

FX Fighter

You lookin' at my pint pal. Eh? After some are ya? KRAK! THWACK! CHOMP! KRUNCH! Lance Concannon gets brutal

Ashraf
Bit of a hippy, likes to meditate and focus his inner being and stuff. Fires balls of psychic energy

Cyben
A robot – big and hard. Likes to zap 5,000 volts through his victims in an effort to destroy all organic life



Magnon
Made out of rock, like Thing out of the Fantastic Four. Breathes fire, stamps and jumps on opponents

Sheba
Cheetara from Thundercats – lots of claws and teeth. Prefers to get on all fours – just hoof her in the face

Venam
A massive praying mantis who chomps on his enemies if he can get close enough

Jake
Typical square jawed humanoid butch hero type – boring but effective. Wears tight trousers

Kika
Human female and toughest of the girlies. Quite fast but squeals pathetically all the time

Siren
Strange blue woman. Not really very good at anything. I haven't worked out her special move yet

SO there's this galaxy containing about five planets, the inhabitants of which all hate each other's guts. To resolve their differences and get things sorted out once and for all they decide to have a fight. But rather than assembling fleets of battle cruisers, inter-galactic starships and the like for a Star Wars style rumble, each of the planets sends forth a lone warrior to engage the others in hand-to-hand combat.

Whoever's left standing at the end of the brawl gets to progress to the next round and the poor sucker on the deck gets his home planet vaporised. This process continues until there's only one planet left. An undeniably ham-fisted approach to interplanetary diplomacy maybe, but it certainly makes for a hard as nails game.

FX Fighter is basically inspired by a popular arcade game called Virtua Fighter, so if you've

PC Home's very own Justine Bowden gives Cheetara from Thundercats the kicking she so richly deserves

FACT FILE

FX Fighter
Philips
0171-911 3081
£39.99
CD-Rom

REQUIREMENTS

486 | 8Mb | 10Mb

seen that you'll have a pretty good idea of what it's all about.

The difference between this and most ordinary fighting games is that the characters and the arenas are 3-D rather than flat, as in Street Fighter style thumpers. This effect is achieved by building the characters with polygon graphics like those used in the Alone in the Dark series, only they are textured so they look much more detailed and less blocky.

The main advantage of using polygon graphics is that the character animation is very fluid and much more lifelike than traditional 2-D sprites.

The general idea of things is to beat the living daylights out of your opponent. Each character can perform an interesting and varied repertoire of brain damagingly violent attacks which are controlled by a various key combinations.

This means that you can either follow the time honoured tradition of hammering all of the control keys at once and hope for the best, or spend a few days practising on the easiest level until you know each character better than your own mum.

While FX Fighter is fairly entertaining if you fancy a bit of light relief after work, the game is at its best when you've got a couple of chums round for a tournament.

There are seven difficulty settings, so whether you're a bit of a hairdresser or harder than a rabid rotwieler on steroids you should be able to enjoy yourself.

However, when it comes to computer games you just can't beat hilarity of thoroughly humiliating other human beings. Luckily, the developers have realised this and included a special tournament feature which allows a group of players to enter their names and duke it out among themselves.

They've also been kind enough to bung a couple of console style joypads into the bargain, so you don't have to huddle around the keyboard like a pigs round a trough at feeding time.

Magnon and Cyben indulge in a little Morris dancing after agreeing to settle their differences peacefully over tea and scones

If all else fails a spontaneous display of amateur acrobatics is sure to bore your opponent into submission

As is traditional in these instances, the characters all share basic attacks like punches and kicks but they also have a lot of special unique moves depending upon their physique.

Magnon for example, who happens to be a dirty great big rock monster can bear hug his opponents and body slam them while they're on the ground. Venam, a kind of giant praying mantis, can spit corrosive acid and gnaw on his victims which makes a really disgusting bone crunching noise.

Unless you've got each of the characters' best moves committed to memory it's a good idea to stick with Jake, the human, who's a pretty good all rounder and fairly unbeatable against any of the other characters if your playing somebody of equal incompetence to yourself.

All you dungaree wearing, short haired, lefty feminist sisters out there will be glad to find that there are a few girly characters available (THWACK!!! Eat fist, gender fascist! - Justine).

As well as being fun to play FX Fighter looks the dog's danglies – the characters are all pretty well put together and animated immaculately. The bouts are fought on each character's home planet, which makes for some pretty smart backgrounds.

If you actually play the game through to the end, you're in for a real treat because you get to rumble with the ultimate headcase, Rygell, on a kind of floating platform with loads of spaceships and stuff flying around in the background.

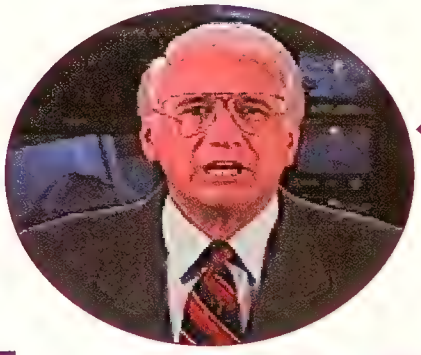
FX Fighter isn't the kind of game that will keep you playing through the night, but it's certainly a lot of fun for a couple of hours here and there. The characters are a little uninspiring although not quite as bad as most games in this genre.

The best thing is that every now and then one of them will pull a move that you haven't seen before and this serves to keep things interesting for a reasonably long time.

If you're the kind of sick social deviant who enjoys playing beat-'em-ups, I can thoroughly recommend FX Fighter as the best there is for the PC. Unless perhaps you've got a beta version of Mindscape's forthcoming Warriors. ■

Aaaarrgghhh! It's a giant praying mantis – let's get out of here before David Attenborough turns up with a film crew

Surprisingly, a 20-ton rock monster manages to emerge victorious from a hard fought battle with Mr Organic Lentil Soup Eater 1995



The all American commentator who I've never heard of

Alex Dampier Pro Hockey 95

Looking for a decent ice hockey sim? Darren Allan may have the answer – almost

ALEX who? I'm sure he's very famous in the States, but he isn't exactly renowned over here. Still, who's going to judge a game on its endorsement figure – certainly not me. If it's good, it's good. Unfortunately, I rather feel that Mr. Dampier's game somewhat misses the mark. More about that in a minute.

Face offs are easy to win – just bung your stick in!

Ice hockey features 12 grown men on ice skates and body armour, chasing a small flat object (the puck) around an ice rink, only pausing occasionally to beat the living daylights out of each other.

The veteran ice hockey game by which all others shall be judged is EA's version, which mixes fast and furious play with excellent, smooth visuals and a superb management/league section. So how does Merit's effort compare with this classic?

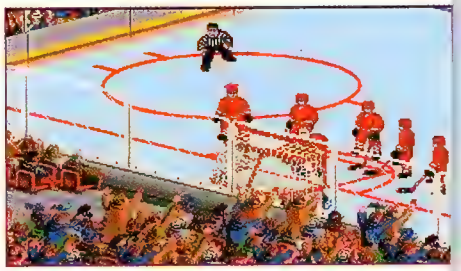
Well, for starters it's about international hockey, rather than EA's which features the proper American/Canadian teams. This may or may not be a good thing depending on personal preference.

Both games have substantial league and management options, and the players are rated in skill categories to make things more interesting. In fact, options-wise matters are pretty much the same in both efforts, and Merit have certainly put thought into presentation.

For example, there is a digitised sports caster who interjects comments between periods, and full match commentary – on the CD version – which is pretty impressive and rivals the quality sound effects of EA's game.

Also, the range of practice options in Dampier is excellent, as not only can you have practice games, but you can work on offence or defence, or even penalty taking which can be a crucial skill. This is a step ahead of EA's NHL.

For the more violent among you, Dampier Hockey also offers the opportunity to punch your opponent in true ice hockey style. This is an option that NHL doesn't offer.



The team philosophises after conceding a goal

However, the real difference between the two games comes when you hit the ice. Visually, Alex Dampier isn't as detailed or as realistic looking as the EA game. The players look rather basic, although the real problem is with the way they move. It just feels somewhat sluggish and unresponsive, which is not really what you want when it comes to a fast and furious sport like ice hockey.

True, you can adjust various elements of the control system, such as whether the joystick will act in accordance with the isometric view of the rink, or just as normal, and other stuff such as automatic selection of the nearest player to the puck. But the bottom line is that it is somewhat unresponsive.

And this puts something of a dampierner on the game as a whole. It's a shame really, because there are a lot of good elements here, most notably the excellent presentation. ■

FACT FILE

Alex Dampier Pro Hockey 95
Merit
0191-460 6060
£39.39
CD-Rom

REQUIREMENTS

386 | 4Mb | 5Mb

Nick Faldo's Championship Golf

Hero of the 19th green Darren Allan swings into action with Grandslam's latest golf sim

NICK Faldo's Championship Golf is all about seeing how close you can get your ball to the holey thing without hitting rough, sand, water or all three.

It certainly has a lot to offer in terms of options. There's a full practice feature which allows the novice to try and hone different areas of his game, and it's possible to play a real round of strokeplay or matchplay.

The control system is the standard affair – the old click for power then click for snap to determine whether the ball flies straight. But it falls down in several areas. Graphically, it looks very bland – a lot of the holes seem to consist of great green tracts of wilderness populated sparsely with the occasional tree.

The other problem is that it just isn't playable. You get no real feeling of realism from the way the mechanics to work, and the whole just fails to inspire. Even worse is that there are only two courses, and these are bland affairs. Compared to a really good offering like my favourite – David Leadbetters – it is a rather badly hooked shot of a golf game.

Given the crowded market you'd really have thought Grandslam could have done more with this one.

The CD version features a rather nice little intro

FACT FILE

Nick Faldo's Championship Golf
Grandslam
0181-680 7044
£39.99
CD-Rom

65% PC HOME RATING

REQUIREMENTS

386 33 MHz 2Mb 1Mb

Davidson.

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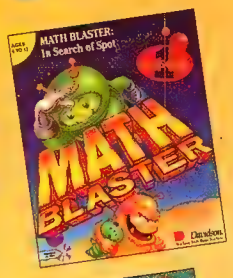

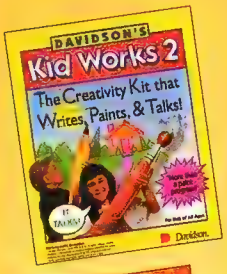

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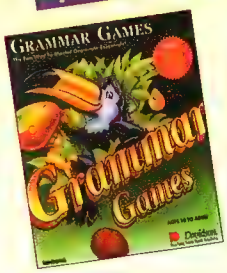

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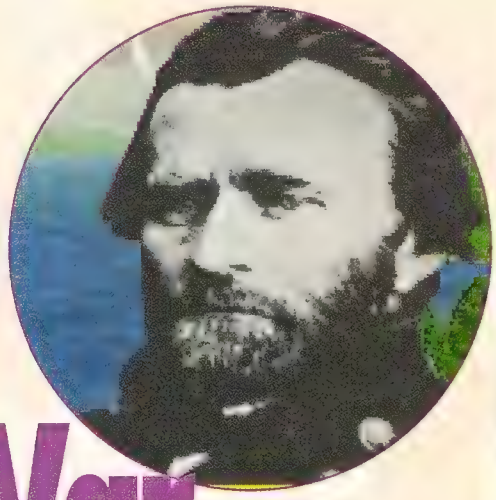


The Civil War

The Blues and the Greys line up for US bragging rights. Rob Smith is your commentator

FACT FILE

The Civil War
Empire
£44.95
0181-343 7337
CD-Rom

REQUIREMENTS

486 | 4Mb | 3.5Mb

ON 1861 the southern states of America's fledgling country withdrew from the Union over the policy on slavery – they wanted it. A civil war erupted which lasted four years, divided families and cost hundreds of thousands of lives.

This sprawling conflict shaped American history, but also had deep implications for their standing alongside the rest of the civilised world. Battles were fought which have become legendary and stout characters emerged whose actions wrote them into folklore.

Now is the opportunity to recreate those battles and step into the shoes of the heroes, taking charge of either side in the American Civil War. Opening with excellent sweeping pastel paintings highlighting some of the action, the tone for this whole product is set exquisitely. Yes, The Civil War is a strategy war game, but it also goes much further, entering the realms of multimedia edutainment.

The Civil War: Brother against brother, family against family. Now you can enjoy it too

It is split into two different areas: A campaign spread over the full battle area – the entire length of the east coast; getting down to the nitty-gritty of the action by recreating one of the most famous historical battles.

An additional area is the online encyclopaedia which provides details on the major players in the war, the military strategies they employed and the types of weapons which were used, among many other things.

Timelines also put events into perspective and include hypertext links to particular areas where further information can be found.

It's a highly impressive, well researched, superbly presented collection of details which provides masses of background information to complement the action.

On the subject of background information, a book entitled Battle in the Civil War by an expert on the subject, Dr. Paddy Griffiths, provides an insight into the styles and mentality of the people involved as well as information on casualty figures and modes of attack. A comprehensive bibliography provides sources of further information.

The campaign setting introduces events by

Developed by the author of Field of Glory, The Civil War also offers 3-D battle representation

Rendered landscapes show the intensity of close quarters combat

Prepare for carnage as the two armies ready their weapons

offering the opportunity to select the level of realism. Five standards are catered for but each separate area, from morale to fatigue, can be adjusted individually.

The campaign is structured in the style of a typical war game. Two phases, orders and movement, make up a day's events. Units are given orders for movement, attacking, defending, withdrawing and even restructuring and changing commander during the night – in game terms, the orders phase.

These are then carried out by the computer, with the opposition enacting their movement which is displayed on a large map with a running commentary of action highlighted in a text box.

fighting distance

SHOULD units come within fighting distance, the option is presented to either take control of the battle or let the computer work it out. Taking control zooms to the action, rendering the landscape in 3-D, and allows all decisions to be made by a click on one of the simple icons. Then the sparks fly.

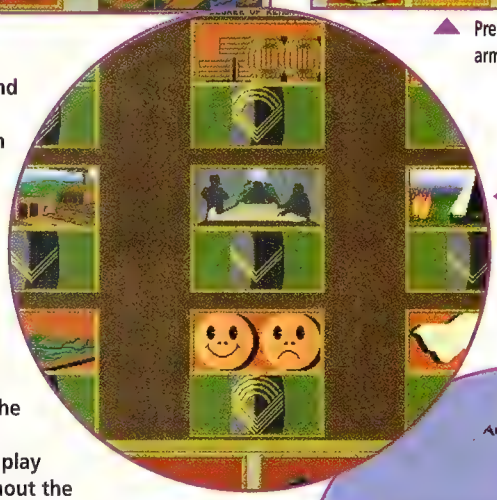
Animated soldiers, cavalry and artillery battle out in fairly simple action sequences but this is a refreshing change from many of the hard-core strategy games which offer no real feel of the carnage actually taking place.

But detailed strategy elements are present. These include fortifying towns, developing infantry, artillery and cavalry units, advancing and then using the navy, organising supply routes and even POW camps.

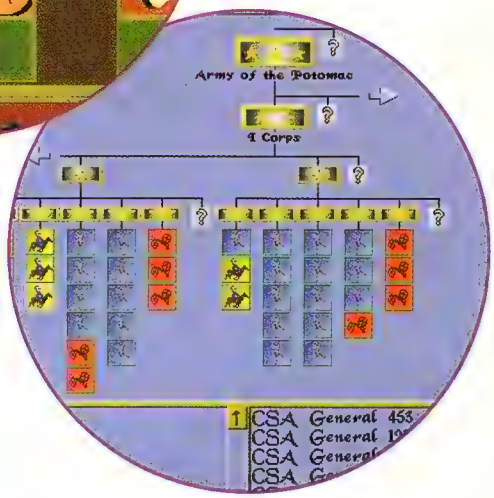
Many songs and tunes which have since become world famous emerged in the bloody conflict of the civil war. Excellent renditions of these play continually throughout the action, pleasantly flavouring the sense of involvement. They also feature in the encyclopaedia where word sheets encourage a sing-along!

The beauty of The Civil War is the simple interface and subtle combination of in-depth strategy and action sequences which make playing a war game, usually a complicated and time consuming affair, an entertaining and informative event.

Few strategy games manage to make novices to the genre feel comfortable with the control interface. The Civil War manages this superbly and at the same time offers one of the most challenging, well developed and entertaining war games on the market. ■



Prepare for carnage as the two armies ready their weapons



Army lists allow the make up of units and their commanders to be altered

The full extent of the battle is shown in the campaign map where huge strategies are planned

A superb encyclopaedia provides details on all the prominent characters of the time

Check out the views of our family panel of testers – see page 68

Kingdom: The Far Reaches

Kerry Culbert invites the neighbours around for a flagon of wine and a drunken rampage through her living room

The blind man on the outskirts of Glendoe can be given back his sight using the correct spell

FACT FILE

Kingdom
Interplay
01235 821666
£44.99
CD-Rom

REQUIREMENTS

386 2Mb 1Mb

HAILED as "An epic, interactive adventure the whole family will enjoy", Kingdom appeared too much for me to take on by myself, so I asked some friends around to don battle shields and spurs. As many people as can be mustered can participate in an adventure of this proportion because of the way it has all been put together.

The norm with games in this genre is to manoeuvre the resident hero's carcass across the screen using the directional arrows, leaving no object or portion of a map unexplored until the quest has been completed. It's a bit of a snore for several people to contribute, though, as only one can push the keys at a time. Kingdom is different.

True, there have been cartoon adventures with snatches of video footage here and there, but the experience is more like watching an interactive movie than playing a game.

In fact, it's more sophisticated than something like Under A Killing Moon, as Interplay have managed to combine the visual advantages of smooth, animated graphics with the more subtle decision-making elements of a conventional epic adventure.

The trouble with most interactive movies is that the listing of A, B or C courses of action narrows down the possible alternatives too obviously, doing away with the need to put together mental maps of places visited and clues discovered in specific spots.

It's a good idea to watch the demo and gather some information of the history behind the quest before doing battle with the forces of evil. The lengthy introduction sets the scene well, and the action is extremely fast.

Basically a young sorcerer's apprentice is meant to succeed where others have failed in finding three essential relics which will re-form a powerful ring of magic and give everyone in the kingdom something to smile about again.

I expected snatches of video and a pause for fellow adventurers to scrutinise the clues but it doesn't work like this at all. Combatants toggle

Jibbering townsfolk advise fleeing or seeking help

between a map and action field, pinpointing locations on the map and casting spells to progress the battle further, or maybe yield a gathered object up to a character or two. "I object to giving a wood-elf's staff to a group of fairies", was a friend's only complaint about this mode of play.

Expect to embark on the adventure a fair few times before you get anywhere. Starting the trek straight in from the intro is a disadvantage once you've solved several of the puzzles.

A trap, such as plunging down a bog, isn't always a negative thing, though, as it will mean an encounter with the resident wizard and the opportunity to pick up a new spell or listen to an additional piece of advice like watching your back in the barren desert lands in case a group of bandits steal the magic pouch of spells.

The spells are often used to make necessary characters spring to life. Use the spell of seeing to make the blind man see on the outskirts of the town for instance, and the officials at the town's Guildhall are more likely to provide an escort for the quest than have the apprentice's head placed on a spike at Glendoe's gates.

At first it seems strange that on location in the fairy ring there are no fairies to be seen to give a staff to. It's all fairly logical though; to make them appear, use the spell of seeing once more. Concealed runes with a sprinkling of understanding will yield one of many clues dotted around the map.

You can zoom in on portions of the kingdom to explore facets in more detail, and enjoy the beauty of panoramic camera shots of the Temple of Cindra or listen to chants in the upper ground of the high pool.

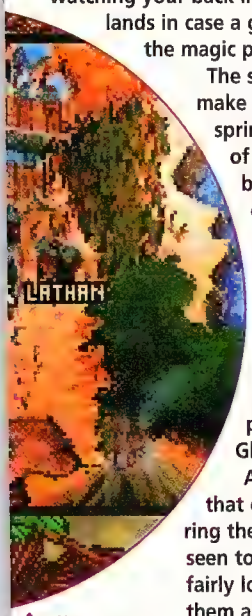
As characters are encountered in remote locations, you must gather together the patchwork of clues and solve the riddles. A relic is hidden in the Castle of Crystal, but it's guarded by two shady tigers that can only be bought off with the Crystal of Caldor. Get the picture?

There are plenty of traps, like the shimmering oasis that's a bit like doing a stint in the electric chair. Resolving problems can modify what happens in various locations though, so don't be afraid to backtrack.

Kingdom is playable by all the family because of its simplicity and intrinsic visual appeal.

Very young children will enjoy the footage if nothing else, and the ease with which puzzles can be solved is balanced against the number of riddles to solve.

Best of all, a completed adventure can be replayed as a whole cartoon that the family adventure created, and then saved on to video tape if you have the requisite hardware. ■

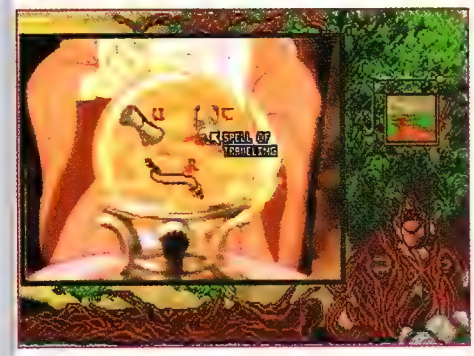


You can zoom in on sections of the map

Ask for an escort at the Guildhall

Pick up a spell from the resident wizard

Every adventurer needs a pouch if he's hoping to travel any distance


Which spells are you likely to need next on your travels?

The chant in the upper pool is an enjoyable experience

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Prisoner of Ice

Rob Smith enters the twilight world of strange monsters, plots and trickery. But enough about the office, here's the review

FACT FILE

Prisoner of Ice
Infogrames
£44.95
0171-738 8199
CD-Rom

REQUIREMENTS

486 | 4Mb | 0Mb

IT'S time to enter the distinctly odd world of Cthulhu, the HP Lovecraft penned setting characterised by marauding monsters with many limbs, even more eyes and an attitude which is normally the preserve of DSS staff. Prisoner of Ice is the follow up to Infogrames' successful Shadow of the Comet, a game which typified the Lovecraftian mould in its weirdness and depth.

Produced in conjunction with Chaosium Inc. of America, who control much of the Lovecraft tie-ins, most notably the hugely popular Call of Cthulhu role-playing game, Prisoner indulges in the familiar investigative style recognisable by any fans of the genre.

Lovecraft is big business. The 1930s settings combine inquiries into the occult, investigators going completely insane, and bizarre monsters in an extremely popular style of horror fiction.

Backed by artwork which did its best to enhance the slightly demonic overtones to the entire style of products, Lovecraft and Cthulhu is not for the faint-hearted. It's all about atmosphere, creating a sense of foreboding, that indefinable quality which grips the reader to the story no matter how much it frightens or horrifies.

The doctor's receptionist arranges an appointment

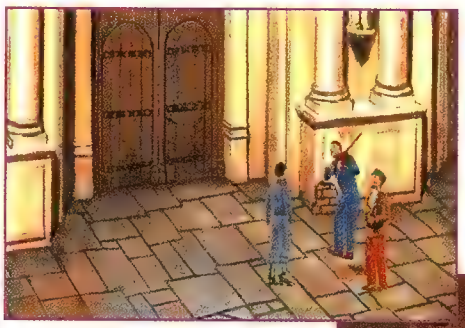
Kettles can be used to steam things open

Plenty of dead bodies bring further intrigue to the mystery

Prisoner of Ice, like Shadow of the Comet, has to create atmosphere in order to remain true to the style and feel of the novels. For computer games, the main way in which this is done is through the music. On this score, Prisoner comes out very well as the tense, tingling tunes maintain that sense of heightened awareness which horror flicks use to such dramatic effect.

The story is based on Lovecraft's novel Mountains of Madness and involves a character by the name of Ryan, a US Naval officer.

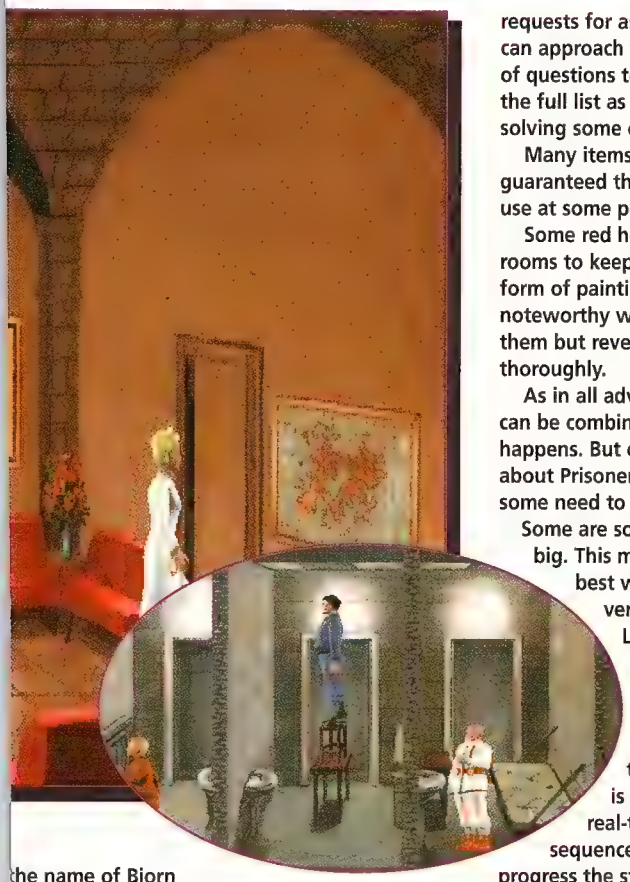
Acting as observer on a British submarine seems an okay kind of job until a young fella by



Plenty of characters can be helpful, others a right royal pain

Prepare to do battle – or have a chat

Unearthing Cthulhu plots takes you to some serene settings



the name of Bjorn Hamsun escapes from a secret Nazi experimental laboratory located deep in the frozen wastes of the South Pole.

He and his father carry a couple of crates in the escape and although pop subsequently dies, the crates are retrieved. That's mistake number one. Number two was putting it aboard the submarine. Three was letting the contents of the crate thaw. Four was not getting the hell out of there PDQ and five, well, only Ryan has the wits to decide what mistake that might be.

Beginning aboard the submarine HMS Victoria, Prisoner is a very well drawn and animated point and click adventure. A number of characters are dotted around and do their utmost to be totally unresponsive to Ryan's requests for assistance. In typical fashion Ryan can approach them and then is offered a choice of questions to ask. Naturally he goes through the full list as this is the only way to begin solving some of the problems.

Many items can be retrieved and it is guaranteed that anything Ryan takes will be of use at some point through the adventure.

Some red herrings are thrown into particular rooms to keep Ryan on his toes. These take the form of paintings or shelves which register as noteworthy when the mouse is moved over them but reveal nothing when searched more thoroughly.

As in all adventure games of this style, items can be combined so that something useful happens. But one of the most infuriating things about Prisoner is the pedantic way in which some need to be found.

Some are so tiny as to be just a few pixels big. This means that on each new room, the best way to find everything is to do a very careful sweep with the mouse. Laborious it certainly is, but worthwhile to save a great deal of messing about.

Adventure games of this style also tend to suffer from a terminal case of linearity. Prisoner is not much different. The illusion of real-time events is created by cut sequences popping up every so often to progress the story to the next chapter.

The problem is that they are pre-programmed to occur just as Ryan has completed a particular task. Still, allow belief to be suspended for a short while and events do unfold at a decent rate of knots.

That said, a few sequences could loosely be described as action. For example, when the first prisoner bursts through the hold door in the submarine it takes a few steps to reach Ryan, giving him the chance to react with the correct response. Fail and it's curtains as a beast which looks to be distantly related to the Alien, bears down with sharp claws and a penchant for killing everyone in its path.

From the submarine, the plot turns to a naval base where Ryan seems to be the only one who can keep his head as all around the other officers lose theirs. This is a little contrived, but it needs to be to give Ryan the chance to do all his exploring and problem solving.

From the base the action switches briefly back to the submarine and then back to the base. Fortunately none of the locations is too large, so time is not wasted by constantly travelling backwards and forwards.

Each location is drawn with great detail and the animation on Ryan and the other characters is particularly well done, even if it does slow down the gameplay a little. The SVGA graphics create a letter box effect which leaves space for an inventory at the top of the screen. This is a very simple and effective interface which is needed to maintain the sense of action in some scenes as swift reactions are needed to avoid an untimely demise.

Sadly the same cannot be said for the voices used for the characters. It is a real let down to sit through a tense, beautifully animated introduction, be casually finding your footing in the game and then be confronted with acting which is best described as rubbish. Ham? There's a whole pig concealed here. Some of the sentences sound so odd, with totally unnatural emphasis on certain areas, that it really detracts from the atmosphere.

Prisoner of Ice is certainly a well presented adventure – with the exception of the speech – which creates a chilling and foreboding atmosphere quite effectively. But it is a little slow and also a little too linear.

The puzzles are all fairly logical with the solution usually being found in an item Ryan has found. While that might sound a bit negative, I did keep going back to it and an occasional burst of speed in the action helped maintain some interest in the story.

Curiously, the original story was supposed to be based on a real Nazi experimental organisation, the Ahnenerbe, created to study certain occult acts and magic practices. You have been warned. ■

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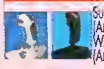

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PC HOME

Machiavelli the Prince

Mark Ulyatt has been plotting and scheming. He wants to be a power, a world power. That's what happens when you live in Sunderland

ALTHOUGH the sort of person who is into world domination, I tend to prefer the more brutal approach to power. You know, put the boot in and squash the opposition – none of this namby-pamby political stuff. So although Machiavelli the Prince was appealing, I was not sure whether there would be enough violence to suit. But I needn't have worried.

Sure, there is some politicking, especially if you play head-to-head against other humans, and the odd bit of trading – well actually the game is mostly trading, at least in the early stages.

But there is also a fair amount of murder and mayhem. You can hire armed forces to do for enemy cities or to attack your rivals' ships. You can hire arsonists to burn up warehouses and homes and, best of all, you can employ assassins to do for various people be they senators or the pope.

Setting up the game is simple. Select a human or one of the four computer skill levels for each of four players, and then the starting money for each player. You can also choose whether to play by modem or not.

Modem play allows real-time play between two human players, but is not really worthwhile. Machiavelli is a game best savoured cold, to coin a phrase, or to put it another way, it plays best when you can take your time deciding where and how to move.

At the start of each turn messages are displayed, like this where someone is building a villa

This means that modem play is not as good as the PBM (play by mail) method.

This allows for two or more human players, with the game position being squirted to the next player in line at the end of the previous player's turn. This means that each can join in whenever it is suitable then pass on the game control.

The ideal situation, however, is where up to four human players take it in turns around the computer, with no sitting on their tod waiting for their next turn to come round.

Once into the actual gameplay it is time to plan strategy. Initially trying to get into politics is too expensive, so it is a matter of building up capital by trading. Various cargoes may be bought, all of which may be sold elsewhere, hopefully at a profit.

But beware, just because a city offers a 200 florin profit on a single unit of cargo doesn't mean that you should fill up. A city will only accept a limited number of each cargo type per

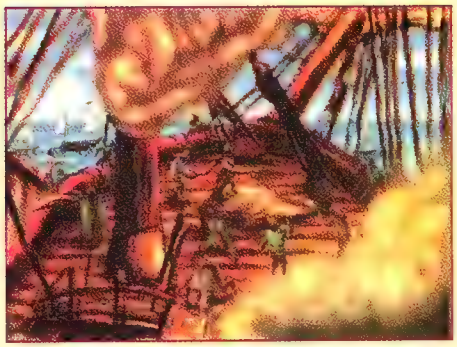
Factors to be taken into account include how dangerous the selected route is

FACT FILE

Machiavelli the Prince
Microprose
01276 684959
£34.99
CD-Rom

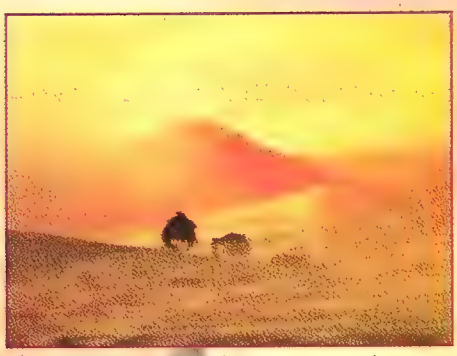
REQUIREMENTS

386 | 4Mb | 10Mb



A life on the ocean wave has its disadvantages. Many disasters are likely to befall the crew on the open sea

You'll meet a varied array of different characters in your travel: They all have a purpose



Selecting a desert route for moving your goods can be shorter, but much more dangerous

While crossing the treacherous ocean a storm breaks putting the ship, its crew and cargo in jeopardy

turn – exceed this and you will be left with half empty holds.

Other factors to take into account are how many turns it will take to get to the destination, as well as how dangerous the route is. The best trade routes are short and coast hugging, while the less profitable are longer and more dangerous ones cross open sea or traverse mountains.

The cargo movers also complicate matters. Should you choose the cheap but limited movement donkey train, the expensive, high capacity cogs or the medium expense, low capacity but fast galleys?

You may also buy warehouse space to store cargo. This allows easy transhipment and storage to sell when a city increases its demand for a cargo, even if the place is a ripe target for arson.

Then there is the church. Buy cardinals and get a constant income as they sell indulgences. Buy enough cardinals and you can elect yourself pope, which means you can call a crusade and go off pillaging, or excommunicate a city. Not to mention getting a cut whenever someone buys a cardinal. It can be fun to buy a cardinal and watch your income bump up as around half the money is returned in your pope incarnation.

The Venetian senate works on much the same principle, except that senators can be bribed to join you, or bribed away to join some other player. Enough votes will give you command of the senate and you can appoint ministers who get an income and hang people for treason.

The den of iniquity allows you to hire slanderers, assassins and arsonists – although you may get blamed for the results. In this case you will lose popularity, but can regain it by spending on good works, if you have enough money, which brings us back to trading.

The only option remaining is the military. Hire armies to defend your more valuable convoys, attack enemy cities, attack friendly cities to deny access to the other players or, better still, pillage your opponents' convoys.

There is a lot to do in Machiavelli, and it doesn't get easier as time goes on. In fact the longer you play the more complex it becomes, because you have to juggle all the trade routes, keep the populace happy, maintain a presence in the senate and keep your interests defended by the military.

There is help though, in the form of trade routes. Any group of units may be given a set route to travel, with cargo exchange at any of the cities they stop at. This means that if you have a regular path to travel you can set up the units, and then just sit back and watch them work.

Even here you have to keep an eye on the route. Cities do change their demand for various goods and care must be taken or you will find yourself making a loss as a city decides it no longer wants a particular item.

The sound is very limited – this is a strategy game after all – with a few informative beeps and the occasional laugh or groan as you assassinate someone or get caught doing so.

However, the majority of the sound you hear is composed of a handful of tunes that play as you take your turn. Normally I turn off music after a few minutes' play because I tend to find it an irritant. But in this case I left it on. I liked it – it matches the game perfectly and never becomes tedious.

Graphically the game can only be described as lush. The colours are very bright and definite with clear maps and easily read info screens.

There are screens for just about everything. The main screen is composed of a large scale map, a small scale map, plus a command section. Others include the cargo purchase section, world economics, the senate, den of iniquity, church and mercenaries.

As you may have gathered by now I liked Machiavelli. It looks good and sounds good, and the play is excellent. There are a few niggles. For example, it is very difficult to find a specific unit since there is no overall list to pick from, but Machiavelli is a game I will be playing, just as soon as I can interest someone else in trading along in the PBM mode. ■

It appears the crowd has lynched Mr Blobby

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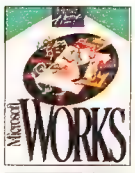

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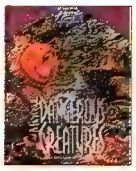
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Top 10: RPGs and adventures

Andy Shaw attempts to demonstrate that he really is King of the Goblins in an alternative universe where everyone does his bidding

IT'S sheer bliss, the perfect *PC Home* assignment. Usually the other reviewers tend to run off screaming when I start to mention the dreaded pixie game as I'm more than likely to take on a misty-eyed demeanour and spend the rest of the afternoon in a state of confused schizophrenia.

This time however, I've actually been given the responsibility of warbling on for two whole pages about my personal favourite role-playing and adventure games. Life doesn't get much better than this.

Please note: What with one person's cup of tea being another's bucket of dead haddock, the games listed are in no particular order. They are all favourites of mine but if you don't like pixies and talking to horses and stuff, you'll probably hate them all and should stick to shoot-'em-ups like Doom.

Full Throttle

Virgin 0181-960 2255 £44.99

LEATHER-clad motor-biking psychopaths are hardly standard adventure-gaming fare, but the fact that this unassuming little title has the LucasArts tag firmly attached is basically a guarantee of top quality.

This is literally as good as any adventure game gets. The animation is superb, the direction is completely out of this world and the plot is funnier than Lance Concannon's hairdo.

You take control of a biking gang leader called Ben sometime in a post-apocalyptic type future. The trouble is, someone is leading the rest of your gang into a dangerous ambush and you've got to sort it out before your gang is no more.

The best thing about LucasArts is that they seem to have been churning out adventures of this calibre since the dawn of time. If you're a bit strapped for cash, why not check out the bargain basements for copies of any of their games since the first Monkey Island.

Many of these appear on the Kixx budget range and are more than worthy of checking out if you missed them.

Alone in the Dark 3

Infogrames 0171-738 8199 £44.99

THE third and last in the series that first delivered a third-person perspective to the PC market. All three are still worth getting, though this Wild West ghost town story is the best yet. When Hollywood turns stale, and the ghosts of dead cowboys start invading the lot, who else is there to turn to but Edward Carnaby PI?

This is apparently the last game that will feature the third-person perspective with fixed camera angles – cameras in subsequent titles will be controlled by the player. So be a part of this unique experience now before it disappears all together.

Ecstatica

Psygnosos 0151-282 3000 £39.99

WEREWOLVES, minotaurs, barking mad preachers and naked women impaled on wooden spikes. Let's face it, you couldn't ask for much more in a Gothic adventure.

You play either a bloke or a woman made up of ellipsoids with Alone in the Dark style gameplay.

You must wander around and under a village and castle in order to find out why most of its inhabitants are dead, dying, changing into lycanthropes or generally do-lally.

Bioforge

Electronic Arts 01753 549442 £49.99

LIFE sucks when you wake up and find half your brain and three quarters of your body has been replaced by that of an android which is under the direct control of someone thoroughly evil and vile.

This is pretty much what happens in Bioforge, a third-person perspective interactive puzzle and adventure beat-'em-up type game. This may sound like a pretty broad sort of category but there are elements of all of these in what is really a superbly put together adventure.

The plot is excellent and the puzzles and adventure type bits are challenging, compulsive and have that I've got to keep going quality.

Discworld

Psygnosis 0151-282 3000 £44.99

MOST people know Terry Pratchet is one of the most popular fantasy authors around, basically because of the success of his Discworld series of novels. This is the game based on characters from the first few books featuring the vocal talent of a variety of top comedy actors including Eric Idle and Tony Robinson.

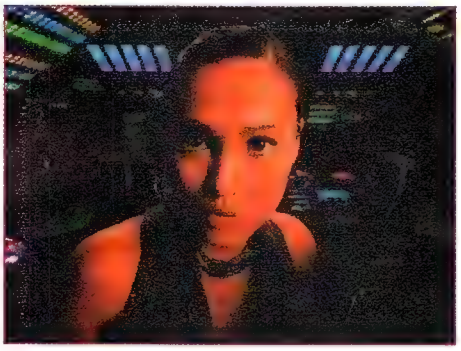
Any game that features this kind of acting talent is going to be good and Psygnosis have exceeded themselves in terms of giggles by staying completely faithful to the novels while managing to include new gags as well as the obvious character jokes. Very amusing.

The Daedalus Encounter

Virgin 0181-960 2255 £44.99

THERE'S been a lot of talk about interactive movies since before CD-Rom became available to deliver them. Since then the formula has been difficult to quantify and almost universally poor, except for very recent efforts like this.

You escort Tia Carrere and some bloke round an alien space vessel trying to find out its secret. The production is good enough to be a movie, the plot is really good and after you have played through the limited interactivity bits you can go back and explore the entire ship. The only problem with this being that Tia stops bouncing around with you.



Ultima Underworld series

Electronic Arts 01753 549442 £39.99

NOW, here's another of those classic role-playing games, the first to use a scrolling 3-D first-person perspective.

The second game was better than the first (predictably) although the latter is now available on budget at £16.99 through Ocean's Hit Squad range – 0161-832 6633.

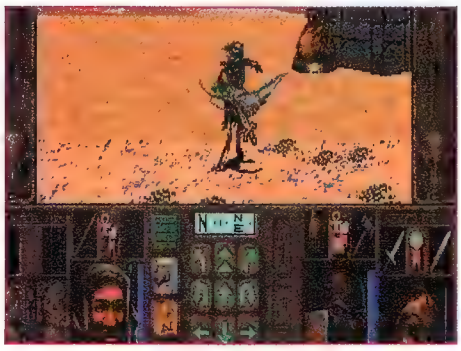
These two games are pure dungeon based though there's far from being anything wrong with that. There is a lot of variety, plenty of monsters and enough puzzles and wandering around to provide a good challenge in both games.

Ravenloft: Stone Prophet

Mindscape 01444 246333 £44.99

IT started with the Eye of the Beholder series, but the AD&D licence held for so long by SSI produced a fair few decent RPGs even if the graphics have been lacking of late. Still, any true computer role-player knows that graphics mean nothing if there is good adventure.

All the AD&D games from the first Beholder onwards are worth getting hold of, and being countable in this subset of sad individuals I love them all. This latest game is a bit of a Gothic affair set in an ancient Egyptian desert setting with piles of undead and plenty of dungeon hacking, exploration and fun.



Star Trek TNG: A final Unity

Microprose 01454 326532 £49.99

ONE for the science fiction TV tie-in contingent, A Final Unity features all your favourite characters from the show for a unique role-playing adventure experience. Take Jean-Luc Picard to the edge of the galaxy and back with the help and advice of his misfit crew.

There are real time puzzles, space combat, exploration and tricky command decisions to be played through, with all the bounding excitement you get off the TV show. Make it so, etc.

Ultima VII

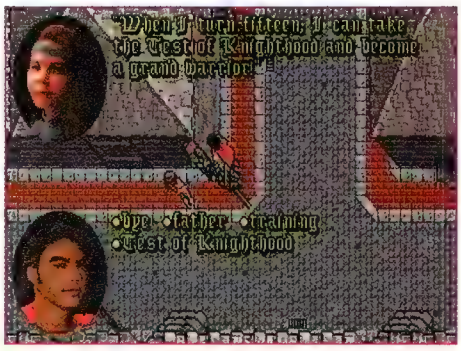
Electronic Arts 01753 549442 £44.99

NO, not the eighth instalment, though that may well hit high in the charts once we're all using P6s and the world is a peaceful happy place. No, Ultima VII, which was once scorned by 286 owners because you needed a state-of-the-art 386 to run it – was it really that long ago?

This game is literally so big, you can't understand how it fits on the six or so disks on which it appeared. If there isn't over 100 hours of role-playing fun in this game I'll eat my PC.

Take control of The Avatar and party from a very godlike, top-down perspective and make them trek about 7,000 miles on pointless sub quests. This is open ended role-playing at its best, with more irrelevant things to do and see than you can waggle a wand at.

Bear in mind that Part 2, The Serpent Isle was less bugged if you don't mind losing a little continuity. Part I, The Black Gate is available on budget at £16.99 from Hit Squad on 0161-832 6633. ■



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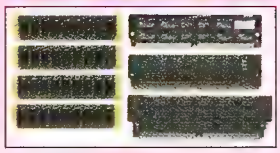

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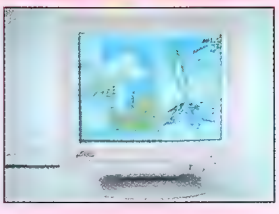

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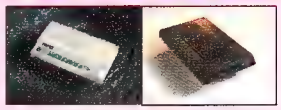

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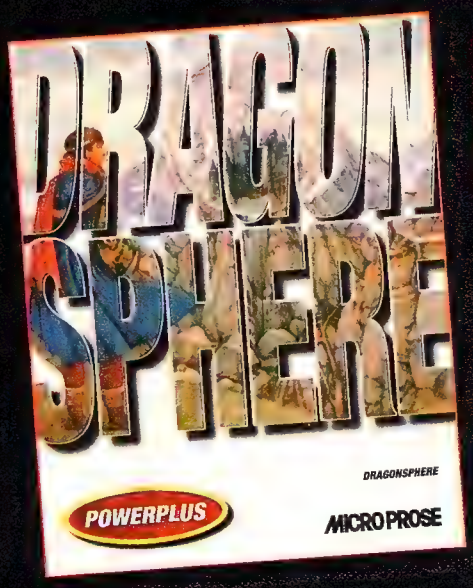

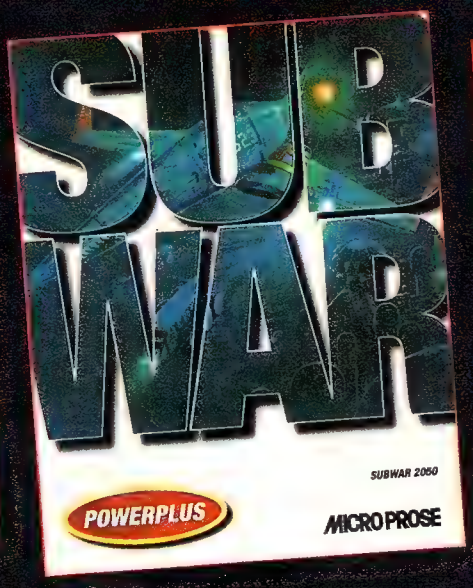

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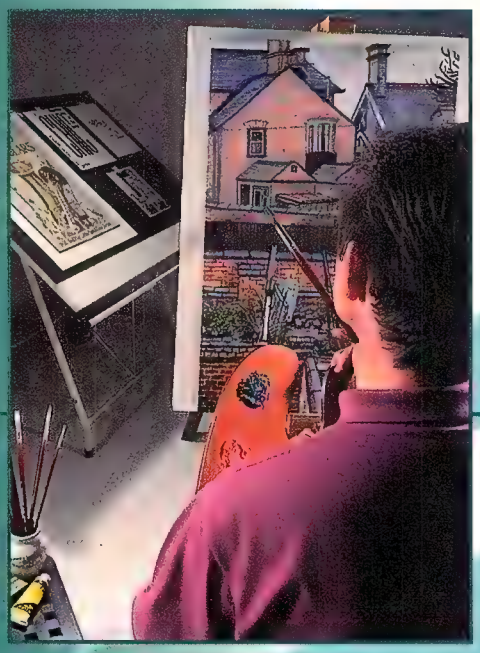
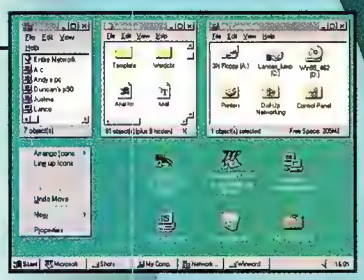
the studio



Making, doing and creating are the essence of the Studio. When you want to write, paint, draw, make music or get on line, this is where to come

Windows 95 122

Cut through all the hype with our hands-on preview of Microsoft's new GUI upgrade



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Fancy writing a book on your PC? Chris Jones delves into the pleasures and pitfalls

Window to the future

Lance Concannon takes the lid off Windows 95 and asks whether it really will make home computing much easier

IT'S always been fairly fashionable among the smug PC know-it-all fraternity to speak ill of Microsoft. For some reason they enjoy repeatedly pointing out the various faults of both the company and their software but rarely seem to suggest practical solutions or alternatives.

Ask these people about the imminent release of Windows 95 and you can be sure of a cynical response, regardless of whether they have actually seen or used the package.

Whether people like it or not Microsoft have got the market pretty well sewn up simply because the public perceive their software to be the global standard. Maybe Microsoft software does have flaws and maybe there are alternatives available to those who want them, but in this business compatibility is everything.

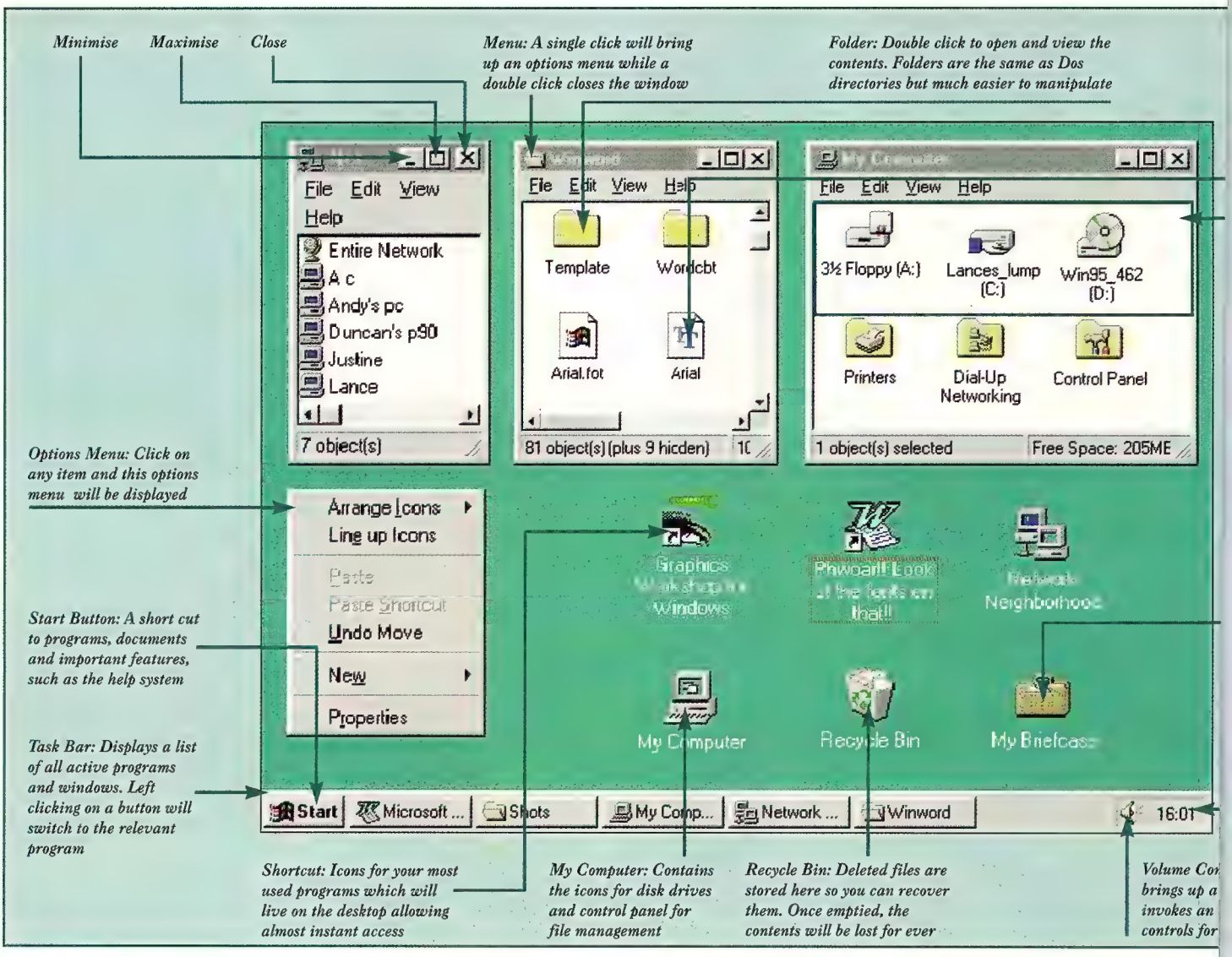
People don't want to splash out £50 for a new game only to find that it doesn't work with OS/2. Buy Microsoft and you know that everything will work nicely. While this isn't necessarily always the case – I'll discuss this in more detail later – it is pretty much true and this is what the paying public want.

My point is that sooner or later – probably later, judging by Microsoft's notoriously elastic release schedule – almost everybody with a PC is going to be using Windows 95.

It's all well and good thinking you won't need to upgrade because your current setup – MS-DOS 6 and Windows 3.1 most likely – is adequate, but there will come a time when both software and hardware manufacturers will stop supporting older technology.

Just think back to a couple of years ago when all those people with 386 machines decided they didn't really need to upgrade – these days most entertainment software demands at least a 486 processor.

Opinion is divided over the



various merits and drawbacks of Windows 95, nowhere more so than in the *PC Home* offices. However, whatever you may have read in other magazines it's important to understand one thing: Nobody outside Microsoft has yet seen the full version.

An unfinished beta copy of the package has been made available to the press and paying public, but until the finished product arrives it's impossible to say what kind of performance increase users can expect.

installation

IT'S important for software developers to ensure that the installation of their product goes as smoothly as possible. After all, this is users' first contact with the software – if they have a hard time of it their opinion of the entire package will become jaded.

Never was the old adage *First impressions last* more true. I was expecting the worst – a certain other operating system I reviewed recently was a nightmare to install and I didn't hold out much hope that the beta version of Windows 95 would be any easier.

I'm pleased to report that my pessimism was completely unjustified; the package was laughably simple to install. All I had to do was click on the occasional confirmation box and within 15 minutes at the most everything was done.

My previous Windows setup had been retained – all my old applications were still there and in working order. Hurrah! If this wasn't enough to be happy about I was stunned to find that all the hardware installed on my machine was also working properly, joy of joys!

After I bemoaned OS/2 Warp's unfriendly installation procedure I received many death threats from IBM fans who insisted that Win95 would be just as tricky. Sorry to disappoint you guys, but my goldfish could install this package with his eyes shut.

its a single file with different icons
es such as executables, documents
Files can be moved or copied by
p and dragging them to the desired
ultiple files can be selected by
around them with the mouse

e:
to open.
copied
simply
them to
mouse

Hard Drive: Access to all of the files and directories on your system. Although filenames can be any length, disk labels are restricted to 11 characters

cesses your CD-Rom
insert an audio CD,
will automatically play it

: You can send
work documents
dump it to
e them home

inting the cursor
ll show the date.
will display a
allow you to edit
date

k

what's new

THE most important aspect of Win95 is that it's a 32-bit operating system. Without getting bogged down in technical details this means that it can fully exploit the capabilities of modern PCs. Previous versions were developed using old technology left over from the days of 8086 and 286-based PCs, so even high-end Pentiums were restricted to outdated operating methods.

For a start, the old 640k base memory barrier is gone, along with all the frustration associated with memory management tools like XMS, EMS, BMX *et al.* Win95 treats the PC's memory as one big lump, which it doles out to programs as and when they ask for it.

Up until now programmers have had to use Dos extenders such as 4GW (like in Doom) to achieve this effect, so in theory it should be easier for the boffins to develop resource hungry packages.

Another side effect of all this wizardry is that Windows users should get proper multitasking for the first time. This doesn't just mean being able to open lots of programs at once, it means they should all continue to run properly even when you switch between them.

However, as I've mentioned previously, we can't accurately assess the package's performance in this area until we have the full product. Historically, multitasking and memory management have been major bones of contention with Microsoft's operating systems but it now looks as though these problems have been addressed.

Another area of criticism with previous versions of Windows lies in its file handling methods. The main problem was that the icons and program group folders shown on screen were only very loosely associated with the actual files and directories stored on disk.

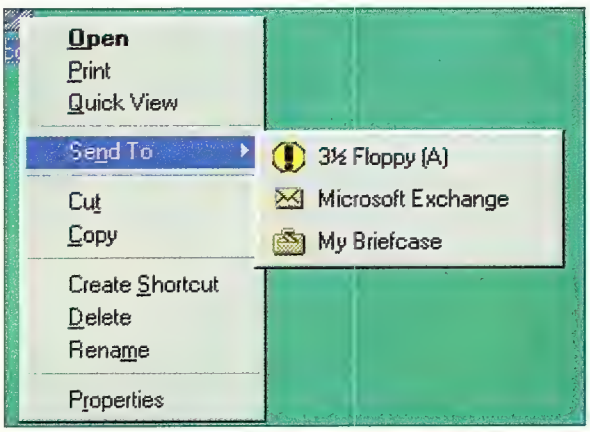
This resulted in much confusion, particularly for inexperienced users who would delete icons thinking they had deleted files only to find that in the cold light of Dos the files were still occupying a sizeable chunk of their hard drive.

The only way to manipulate files in Windows was with the unfriendly and cumbersome File Manager and many people would argue that it was much simpler to carry out any work from Dos.

THE new system is much more intuitive. Everything stored on the hard drive is now displayed graphically by Windows. Every single drive, directory and file to be found on your system is now shown as an icon, but it's worth pointing out that directories are now called folders

So, if you delete an icon, the corresponding folder or file will be removed from your hard drive.

Win95 also uses what is know as the drag-and-drop method. This means that you can move files around your system simply by moving the icons on your desktop. For example, to copy a file to the floppy drive all you would have to do is click on the appropriate icon, drag it across to the A: drive's icon and then release the mouse button



▲ *Left clicking on any folder produces this menu of options*

freasure trove

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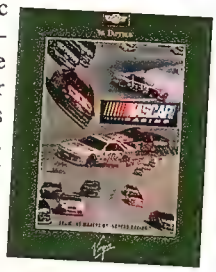
Nascar Racing



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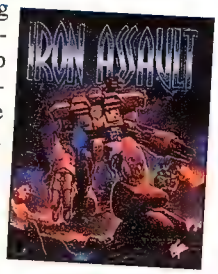

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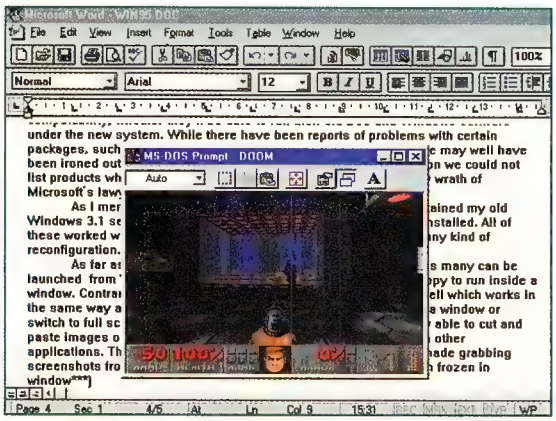
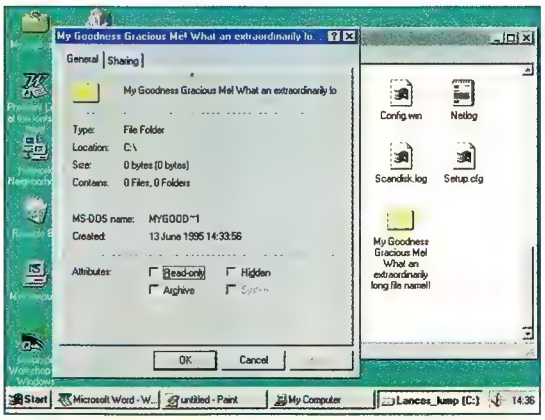
Window to the future



▲ *Windows 95 allows you to cut and paste text or graphics from Dos-based software to the Clipboard*



▲ *All the attributes relating to any given file can be viewed with one click of the mouse button*

thereby dropping the file on to the disk.

Clicking the left mouse button on absolutely any object in Win95 will bring up a list of options relevant to that object, and for files and folders this includes the Send To.. option. This option will give you a list of available destinations to copy the file to, including the A: drive, which provides an extremely quick short cut for copying files to floppy.

AMONG the destinations listed is The Briefcase – yet another clever little idea. If you frequently take your work home in the evenings you'll be familiar with the routine of copying all of your important files and documents to a floppy at the end of the day.

Windows 95 allows you to send all your important files to The Briefcase, which can then be transferred to a floppy in one easy operation.

ONE of the more notable advances in Windows file handling capabilities is that filenames are no longer restricted to seven characters. You can now assign file names of any length and also use spaces.

This should cater for even the most descriptive of titles. The old three letter extensions are out, but the file type (Tif, Txt, Exe and so on) is listed along with its attributes when they are displayed.

The system offers several methods of launching programs, the first of these being to double click on the appropriate icon just as in earlier versions.

Things have been simplified even further with the introduction of the Start button, which resides on the left hand side of the Task bar (below) which sits at the bottom of the screen and displays a list of all programs and folders which are currently open.

You can jump to or close programs from the Task Bar with a couple of mouse clicks, which genuinely helps to speed up the way you work once accustomed to it.

Back to the Start button. Clicking on this will instantly bring up a list of available programs which can be launched by a single mouse click. When new packages are installed they are automatically added to the Start Menu, but if you later delete the program you have to remove it from the menu yourself.

For programs that are used very frequently you can create a shortcut icon. This is instantly accessible from the desktop without having to open any other folders or menus whatsoever.

Programs can also be launched with the Run option which can be found on the Start menu and allows you to browse through the system for executable programs, much in the manner of the old way of using Windows 3.1x

out with the old?

ONE of the prime concerns for many of the people who will be upgrading is backwards compatibility – whether they'll be able to run their old Dos and Windows software under the new system.

While there have been reports of problems with certain packages, such as the 3D Studio graphics rendering software, these may well have been ironed out by the time Windows 95 is complete.

For this reason we could not list products which definitely won't work without incurring the mighty wrath of Microsoft's lawyers. We have a list drawn up, and as soon as the final on-sale version of Windows 95 arrives in the office we will check everything off again and publish the results.

As I mentioned in the installation section, Win95 successfully retained my old Windows 3.1 setup including all the programs I had previously installed. All worked without any problems and without the need for any kind of reconfiguration.

As far as Dos programs are concerned, the signs are good as many can be launched from Windows 95's normal mode and seem perfectly happy to run inside a window.

Contrary to popular belief Win95 does come with a Dos shell which works in the same way as Windows 3.1 Dos prompt in that you can run it in a window or switch to full screen mode.

A nice new feature is that you can now cut and paste images or text from Dos programs to the clipboard for use in other applications. This was instantly useful to the *PC Home* team as it makes grabbing screenshots from many Dos-based games a piece of cake.

If your Dos program absolutely refuses to run under Win95 the last resort is to switch to Dos mode. Doing this will close down any applications and reboot the machine into Dos, hiding all traces of Windows 95 from any software which tries to run.

We have not come across any software yet which will not run properly under Dos mode. When

Pitfall

ONE of the first games companies to begin supporting Windows 95 are Activision who in August will be releasing Pitfall: The Mayan Adventure.

It is already available in many of the games console formats, but the Windows 95 specific version features enhanced graphics and animation.

It's a bouncy platform adventure set in the rainforest. Players must guide Harry Jr. through 13 levels to rescue his father.

Gameplay is simple but enjoyable and very much along the lines of Sonic and Mario.

Our pre-release demo ran very smoothly in full-screen mode, and for most of the time it was okay in a window but it did become very jerky occasionally.

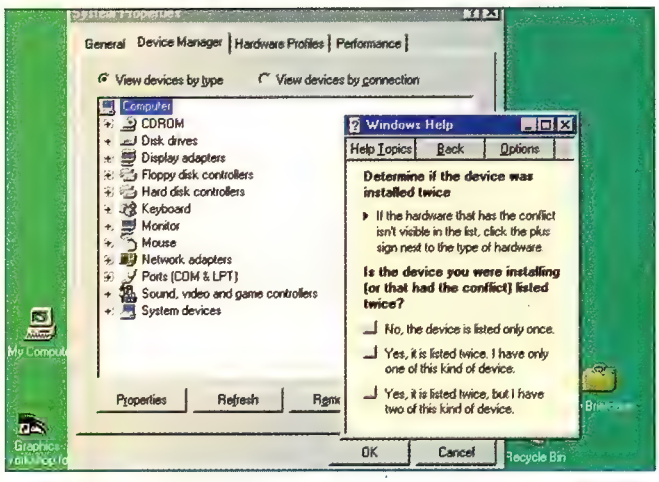
Pitfall should retail for £44.99, and Activision can be reached on 0181-742 9400.

Window to the future

you try to launch an MS-DOS program Win95 will detect any possible problems and suggest the best way to run the package.

Cynics view the inclusion of the Dos prompt and mode as a sign that Windows is still not a complete operating system, able to fully support a PC on its own. This is quite obviously complete nonsense because the system would function perfectly well without them.

They are included purely to offer users the ability to run software which was written for a much older operating system. It's called backwards compatibility.



The Hardware Conflict Troubleshooter painlessly leads you through the process of locating and resolving interrupt conflicts, the most common of hardware problems

While it's easy to understand people being anxious that their current software will still work when they upgrade to 95, it's important to remember that as soon as the package becomes publicly available developers will begin to create software specifically designed for the new platform.

Windows 95 will perform a lot better if it's running software which has been specially written to exploit its new capabilities. For example, the current version of Doom needs to be run from the Dos prompt in full screen mode.

However, at the last ECTS show Microsoft were displaying id Software's Windows 95 version which could be run in a re-sizeable window. Although hardware problems such as IRQ conflicts aren't completely banished, Win95 does go a long way to help solve them with minimal hassle. A program called the New Hardware Wizard will automatically scan your PC any new hardware and automatically install it.

I tried installing a new network card using this system and didn't encounter any problems, although I have to say it did take a while for the program to scan my system. To help smooth out any problems which may arise Microsoft have included a Hardware Conflict Troubleshooter. This uses the vastly improved Help system and carefully guides users through the process of tracking down and resolving any interrupt conflicts.

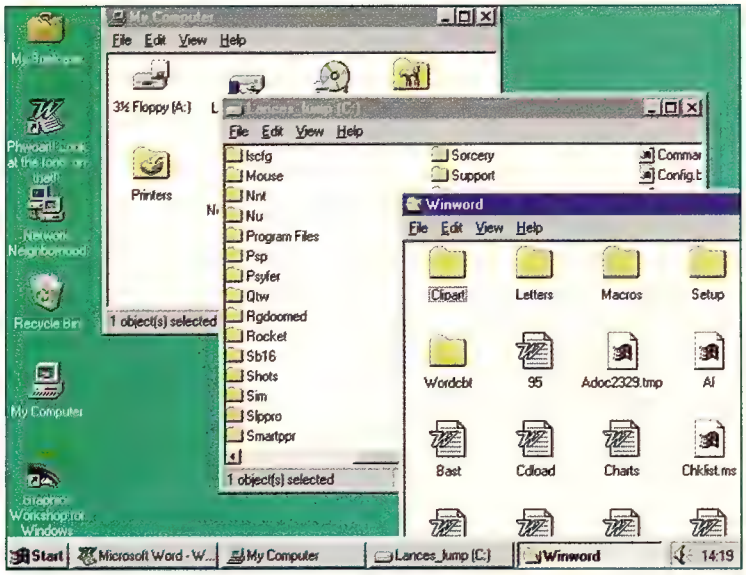
If you are still having problems it's possible to dig deeper through various menus to find the details on the system components and their drivers, which is getting back to how the old Windows dealt with device drivers.

While this is some way off the technophobe's dream of being able to use new hardware as soon as it's plugged in and switched on, it's certainly leaps and bounds ahead of anything else available.

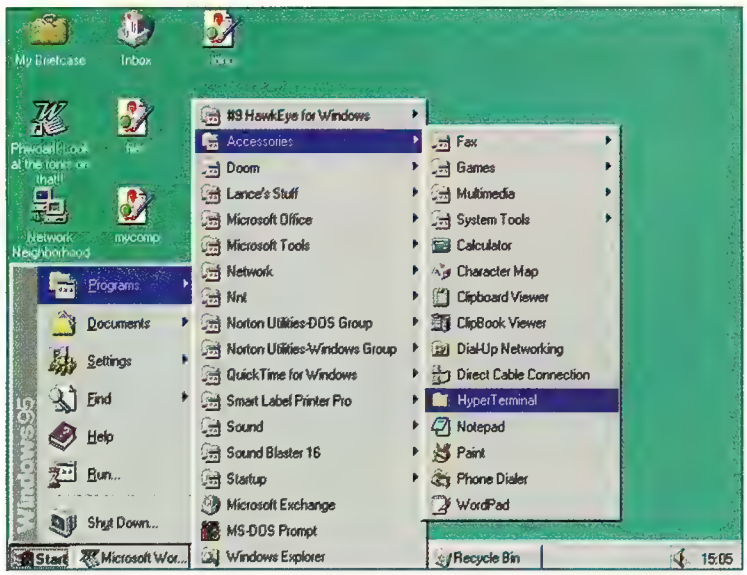
Although Microsoft have a policy of suggesting prices and allowing retailers to make up their own minds, you can expect to pay £150 for the full version of Windows 95 and around £80 for an upgrade from earlier versions of Windows.

There's also going to be a special edition available called Windows 95 Plus which will include an Internet package, compression software and additional screensavers.

Microsoft's UK public relations company have sworn solemnly on their grandmother's graves that Windows 95 will absolutely definitely be released on August 24. Until then we'll be keeping you up to date with progress reports. ■



Disks, directories and files are shown as icons, which usually indicate the type of file they represent. Left clicking will bring up a menu of options available for that file



The Start Menu offers almost instant access to your programs. Any recently created files – documents, pictures and so on – will be listed in the Documents section

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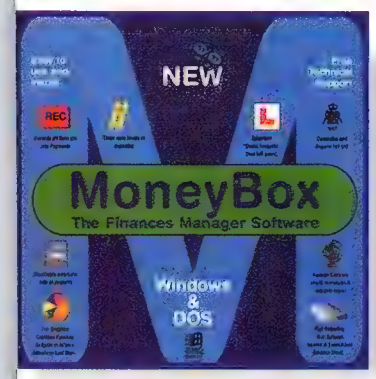

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Boogie wonderland

With well over 100 sound cards on the market, choosing one isn't easy. Will Sargent narrows the options down to five value-for-money stormers

SIX years ago, fitting a sound card to a PC was a far less complicated affair. You only had one option – the AdLib card from the Canadian audio-pioneers of the same name. Soon fter the launch of this simple FM ound chip – I'll explain the jargon hortly – Creative Labs, a company vhose name every PC-owner hould know, launched the oundBlaster.

This was a popular, if simple, ound solution which can claim to ave helped the PC gaming industry et where it is today.

The strength of this card was the act that it brought alongside a new M-chip digital effects which could e played on-top of the four-channel ines, ideal for in-game effects and oice samples.

If you have walked into a omputer store recently, with a view buying a card for your new PC r a better one for your older model, ou will have noticed that the sound ard market has become considerably more complicated.

Gone are the days when every audio option carried the same FM sound chip. The PC market has now just about outgrown this most elemental method of sound production.

The most popular new standard is that of *Wavetable* roms, where, instead of simulating the sounds of musical instruments through creating different sound-shapes – which only ever created lots of similar sounding electric piano effects – the instrument sounds are sampled from real instruments and then stored on a Wavetable Rom in compressed format.

Because the market is so competitive, prices of even Wavetable cards are now very reasonable and to be quite frank, the old FM-standard isn't worth bothering with unless you are on an extremely tight budget.

Some cards, like the Gravis UltraSound Max and the AWE 32 from Creative – both of which are considered here – store and create sounds in a different way to either of these standards. The Max has a flexible, if more complicated system of loading patches of instrument sounds into the 512k of on-board memory, therefore allowing a different *map* of sounds to be loaded in virtually seconds.

The AWE32 is different again, in that it has a professional standard synthesiser (the EMU8000) from which it generates nigh on perfect syntheses of real instrument sounds.

Also, built into these more complicated cards are special effects such as chorus, reverb and flanger to add depth and character to the final output.

With both these more professional sound options available for well under £200 if you look hard enough and many of the Wavetable-equipped cards selling at £50 or so less, top-quality PC audio is now a practical option for home PC users.

This view is reflected in my round-up of what I consider to be five of the most popular cards on the market.

Orchid SoundWave 32 ProSCSI

Boogie wonderland

profile	
Product	SoundWave 32Pro SCSI
Price	£160
Supplier	Orchid Technology
Tel	01256 479898

Summary
Great sounding samples. Orchid have addressed their previous emulation problems with a quality new range of cards

8

THIS sound card sits one up in the series from Orchid's GameWave. It possesses FM and Wavetable sound synthesis and 16-bit (DAT quality, 44 KHz) sampling capability – as do the rest of the sound cards in this roundup.

The GameWave, as its name suggests, was sold primarily as a music box to accompany PC game playing, and this is why the card was stripped to a bare minimum. As a result, Orchid decided to drop the capability to record sound-samples from an external source such as microphone or CD-audio track.

This sampling capability has always been available on the SoundWave and therefore line-in and mic sockets are built into the back-plate to accommodate any coughs and burps you might want to record and then edit.

A new DSP (Digital Signal Processor) has been built into the latest version of this card, which can generate special effects such as the now commonly found 3D Q-Sound feature, chorus, reverb, flange and pitch-shift.

The one we received for review was the 32 ProSCSI version. The SCSI element of its name refers to another common feature of today's sound cards, that of built in CD-Rom drive support. Most made for the PC, for the last year at least, have included proprietary CD-Rom drive interfaces. More than often these are for specific models such as Panasonic, Sony and Mitsumi drives.

The SoundWave32 Pro is available in two configurations, either SCSI – strangely, with a Mitsumi interface squeezed in next to it – or a standard model which has plug in slots for

Sound FX Classic 3000

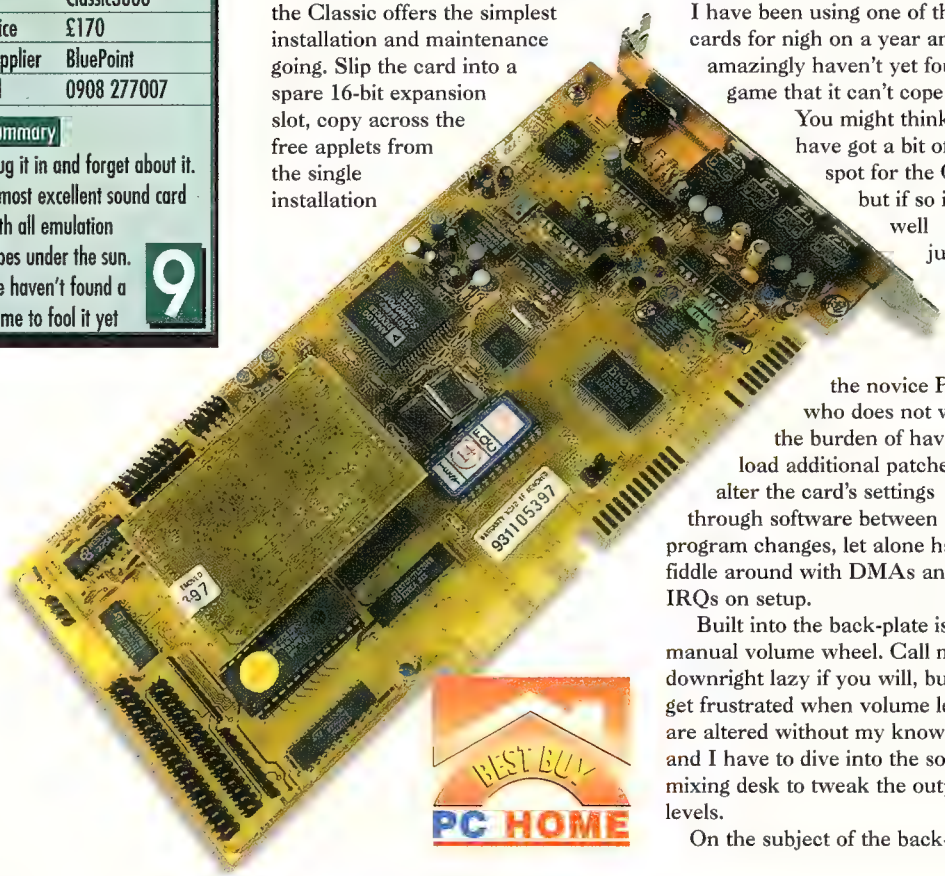
profile	
Product	SoundFX Classic3000
Price	£170
Supplier	BluePoint
Tel	0908 277007

Summary
Plug it in and forget about it. A most excellent sound card with all emulation types under the sun. We haven't found a game to fool it yet

9

BLUEPOINT deserve much credit for producing this most uncomplicated and feature-filled unit at a price to fit the home-user's pocket.

Compared with the competition, the Classic offers the simplest installation and maintenance going. Slip the card into a spare 16-bit expansion slot, copy across the free applets from the single installation disk, and you have rock-steady SoundBlaster, Midi and Roland emulation that needs little pre-configuring or tweaking between Dos games and Windows software.



I have been using one of these cards for nigh on a year and amazingly haven't yet found a game that it can't cope with. You might think I have got a bit of a soft spot for the Classic but if so it is well justified. It's a great card for the novice PC user who does not want the burden of having to load additional patches, or alter the card's settings through software between program changes, let alone have to fiddle around with DMAs and IRQs on setup.

Built into the back-plate is a manual volume wheel. Call me downright lazy if you will, but I still get frustrated when volume levels are altered without my knowing and I have to dive into the software mixing desk to tweak the output levels.

On the subject of the back-plate, Bluepoint's card ships with a second, separate plate which houses both a joystick and Midi connection, to get your gaming and music writing up and running from day one.

This does leave a redundant expansion slot, but most users, if using Midi equipment, will be prepared to make the sacrifice.

save cash

SAVING you another £15, a Midi cable to connect to a dummy keyboard or other Midi instrument is also bundled with the card. Even cards like the AWE and MAX don include a free Midi cable, and they are aimed specifically at the more experienced PC-musician. A jack-to-phono lead is also included for immediate connection to your hom hi-fi.

Again, like the Orchid card on test, very few games will offer support for the Classic directly, which can often mean that where there is only SoundBlaster Pro or 16 support – both of which the car doesn't support – you are forced to use 8-bit SoundBlaster, which can' hope to do this Wavetable-equipped card much justice.

If you want a simple-to-use quality sound card at a most reasonable price, the Classic FX 3000 warrants most serious consideration.

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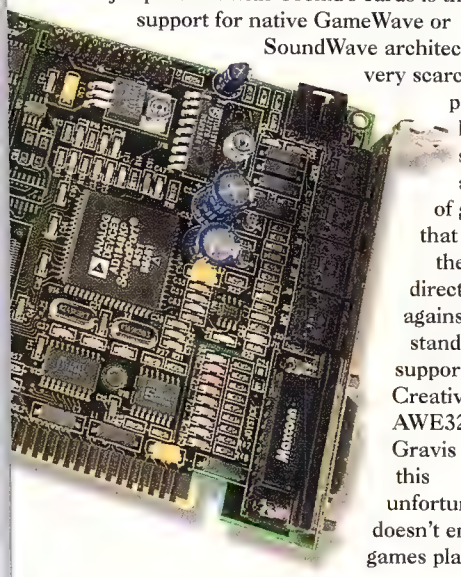
connection to the aforementioned popular makes.

Not all manufacturers accommodate SCSI CD-Rom drive users, so if you already own a lightning-fast CD-Rom drive, this model is worth considering as an expansion-slot space-saver.

A major problem with Orchid's cards is that support for native GameWave or SoundWave architecture is so very scarce – I personally have seen only a couple of games that support these cards directly. Up against almost standard support now for Creative's AWE32 and the Gravis Max, this unfortunately doesn't endear games players to Orchid's music generators. This shortfall is compensated for by their card's ability to manage General Midi or Roland's extended MT-32 sound map alongside SoundBlaster emulation – necessary for simultaneous digital effects.



The good news is that, unlike the many cards that claim to emulate the industry-standard SoundBlaster and General Midi options perfectly, the SoundWave can fully justify the statement.

Throughout a prolonged Doom session, a game which we have found trips up more cards masquerading as SB-clones than any other, I didn't notice a hiss or Midi instrument out of sync with the action.

With Wavetable-equipped and SoundBlaster-emulating cards now the norm, after the steadiness of its juggling simultaneous SoundBlaster effects and Midi music, the second most important aspect of a good card is the quality of the instrument sounds stored in its Wavetable Rom.

Again, The SoundWave performed admirably. Its strong point is the quality of percussion sounds. High-hats and side-sticks are reproduced without any additional clicks or premature cut-off and other, more complex instrument samples, are of an equally high standard. But *please* Orchid, leave the speakers out next time!

miroSOUND PCM1 pro

WE were pretty fortunate to have one of these new miro cards for inclusion in this roundup, because this German company, better known for its high-end and new multimedia graphics cards, have only just received the first few off the production line.

The PCM1 pro is their mid-range offering and part of a comprehensive new range of cards, starting with a budget FM model and finishing at the very top with a £200+ Wavetable spectacular (strangely enough the top model includes a built-in radio tuner, too).

It's bundled with a formidable collection of sequencing and sample-editing utilities that you might use for a week and then, when you realise you're not the next Stock, Aitken or Waterman, will be tucked neatly under the sound card's dedicated program group in Windows.

Then again, if you are a budding Klik&Player, or revel at the prospect of producing tunes and samples for your home or business multimedia presentations, Ballade Lite (a cut-down version of the respectable sequencer from DynaWare) and Sound Forge sampling studio possess between them everything you'll need to pull this type of work off.

The sound board is completely jumper-less, which leaves all of the IRQ, DMA and emulation settings to be executed solely through software.

SNDINIT is a Dos-based program to do exactly this. Here you set the unique SoundBlaster and Midi IRQs and DMA numbers. If you have a CD-Rom drive connected to the card, you can specify it's I/O address through this program, too.

Something uncommon with sound card installation software is a de-install facility, which this install program carries (the only other card with this option is the GUS MAX). If you quake at the thought of deleting sections from your Windows.ini and .sys files, this feature is a godsend.

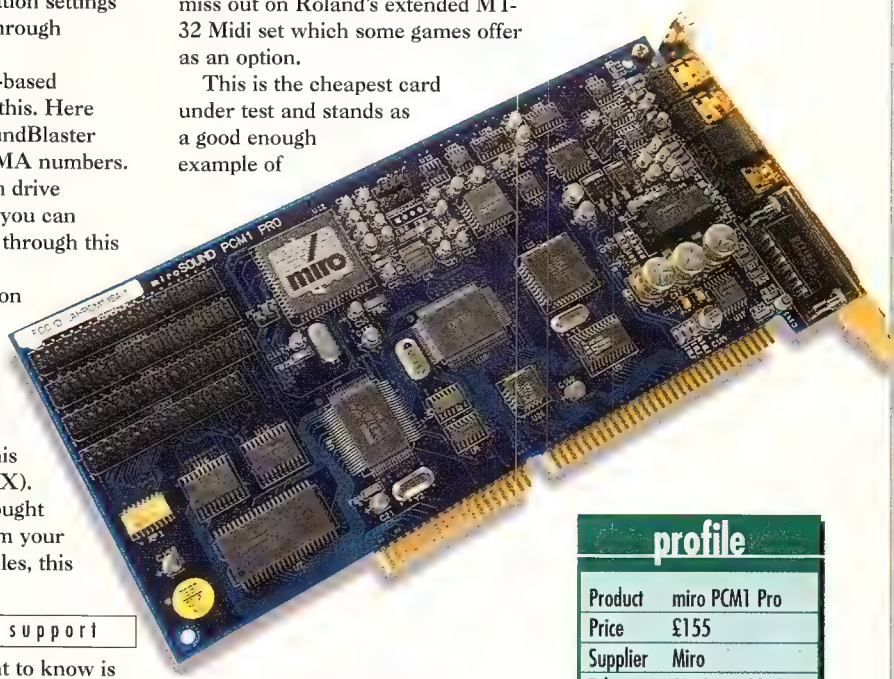
direct support

WHAT you really want to know is what the card's emulation is like, because I can assure you, it will be some time until it receives direct support from the games companies. So, for the time being you are going to be 100 per-cent dependant on emulation of some sort.

The PCM1 can manage SoundBlaster, SoundBlaster Pro II, General Midi and Roland MPU-401 for Windows, which is a reasonably comprehensive list, even if it does miss out on Roland's extended MT-32 Midi set which some games offer as an option.

This is the cheapest card under test and stands as a good enough example of a 24-voice polyphony (playing simultaneously) Wavetable card with proper SoundBlaster support through its Yamaha OPL4 chip.

Miro gave us an expected street price of £155 but this could change by the time it ships. If it can drop a little lower then it will serve as a good entry-level Wavetable option.



profile

Product	miro PCM1 Pro
Price	£155
Supplier	Miro
Tel	01494 510250

Summary

Good entry level card for the Wavetable-wannabe. It has no less than four CD-Rom drive interfaces – including the new IDE standard, Panasonic, Mitsumi and Sony

7

UltraSound MAX

Boogie wonderland

THE original 8-bit Gravis Ultrasound received a mixed bag of reactions. Loved by some and slated by others, its own sound production was nothing less than immaculate.

Unfortunately, because of some shaky software emulation of the SoundBlaster standard, its high-quality sound output was somewhat overshadowed. Also, the first UltraSound had support for 3-D sound which was a bit of a breakthrough for the time.

The new card, the UltraSound Max, has brought Gravis right to the forefront of PC sound technology with some solid software emulation and a sensible half-meg of onboard sample memory.

Not that support for this new card isn't strong enough already. Like the AWE32, the Max receives almost full native support from almost every new title that we review. I state almost full because for some strange reason, games house Bullfrog have chosen not to support it as of yet.

The Max is more of a music-dabblers card than any of the others, primarily because of its very flexible approach to the way in which it stores *patches* of samples. Now that you have a full half meg of memory to play with, a full Midi set of 44KHz samples is possible. Previously, the UltraSound's 256k would only allow samples of half this clarity.

The card has CD-Rom interfaces for three popular CD-Rom drives, although no version for SCSI as of yet, so if you are planning on buying a drive with the card, make sure it's either a Sony, Mitsumi or Panasonic.

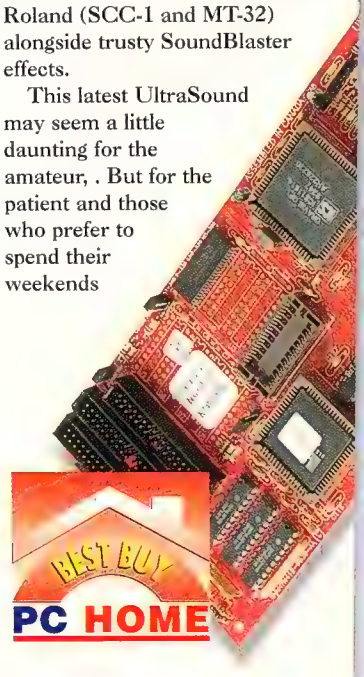
popular patches

THE Max uses an emulator called SBOS to act as a standard SoundBlaster. Using this can be a bit of a chew and it often needs tweaking to get right. Patches for most popular games are available through the on-line services like CompuServe and mail-order shareware and music specialists.

These will ensure that any gaps in the emulation for a particular title are plugged and therefore shouldn't affect the quality of audio output or running of the game.

MegaEM and EMUset are two other emulation managers, both of which are considerably less of a hassle to maintain than SBOS. This ensures that where a game doesn't offer support for the Max you can choose the failsafe combination of Roland (SCC-1 and MT-32) alongside trusty SoundBlaster effects.

This latest UltraSound may seem a little daunting for the amateur, . But for the patient and those who prefer to spend their weekends



profile

Product	UltraSound MAX
Price	£200 to £220
Supplier	Koch Multimedia
Tel	01252 714340

Summary

Marginally better quality sound than the AWE but a little complex for beginners. *Patch* management might prove a little complex for the midi newcomer

9

AWE32

CREATIVE Labs, as would be expected, were first to announce the next generation of 16-bit sound cards. By just pipping Gravis to the post with the UK launch of the AWE32 in March '94, they managed to get a head start in the race between the Max and their own feature-filled newcomer.

Inevitably, the AWE32 was destined to outsell any of the competition without having to even break sweat, what with the prestigious yellow and blue Creative branding and SoundBlaster label behind it. But with many new companies providing very good audio solutions other than Creative, we still needed to see a quality product.

Creative decided to leapfrog the standard Wavetable merchants, instead launching a WaveBlaster add-on for their line of SoundBlaster 16 cards – see panel *Plug and Play.*

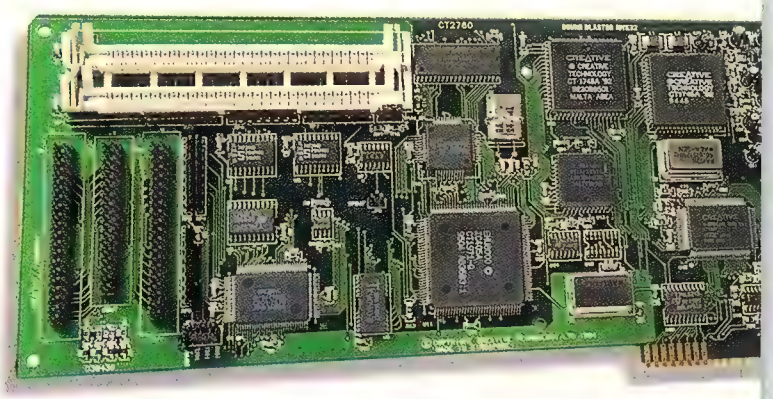
Through buying out US music company EMU in 1994, they adopted their professional, upgrade-able sound technology to incorporate with the AWE32.

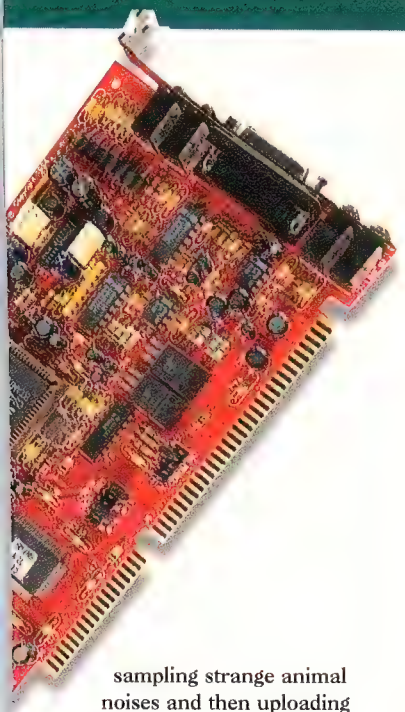
Like other serious cards from Roland and Turtle Beach, the EMU8000 chip contains very high quality samples with additional Chorus, Reverb and Qsound effects processors that can be applied to them – the chorus effect of the AWE is arguably the best I have heard.

The card carries an option to install a whopping 28Mb of industry standard memory Simms, following which you can download EMU's professional quality SoundFont sound sample patches – a selection is available from PC music specialists Et Cetera in the UK.

Obviously, unless you are a real Midi-muso, you are not going to shell out for 28Mb and use this feature to its full potential. And this is exactly why Creative have launched a *Value* edition of the AWE, without the upgrade option, priced at £160 to £170

If you wish to install all of the free software bundled with this card you'll need to set aside 10Mb of hard disk space for it. Much of the free software, such as Voice and Text Assist, is of limited use, but also included are an excellent Midi sequencer from Cakewalk and one of those essential Windows hi-fi systems, through which





sampling strange animal noises and then uploading them into a brand new Midi set, you couldn't ask for better quality audio.

The Max is my favourite, but then again, I just enjoy sampling animal noises.

A point worth mentioning is that like the AWE32, the Max is available in cut-down form. The product is called the ACE and sells for a little less than £100. Basically it is a MAX without the pack.

Plug and Play

IF you already own a sound card you have a great number of alternatives to hand, other than buying and installing a brand new card. Creative Labs, Gravis and Media Vision – whose new card unfortunately didn't make the roundup, but check it out in the news, anyway – all sell miniaturised circuitry with the fundamental architecture of their latest models onboard.

New for users of the SoundBlaster16 is the Wave Blaster II, which sits on-top of your existing card, transforming it into an all-singing, all-dancing AWE32 without the extra ram.

Also, as I briefly mentioned in the review of the UltraSound Max, Gravis are now selling a card called the ACE. Unlike the WBII, which piggy-backs your existing card, it sits in a separate slot and links to your old sound card via a cable. This then allows it to use the line-in, mic and speaker ports of the old card, while merrily singing away as a full-blown MAX, patches 'n' all.

Media Vision have also caught onto the idea and have launched a similar card to Creative's, called the Professional Wavetable Upgrade. Like the other two, it will bring far better quality audio from your haggard SoundBlaster 16 or clone that will accommodate the daughter-board upgrade. Oh, and lots of special effects like chorus, reverb and 3D-sound.

So how much can I save?

ACE £89
Gravis 0171-352 9402

Wave BlasterII £99
Creative Labs 01734 344322

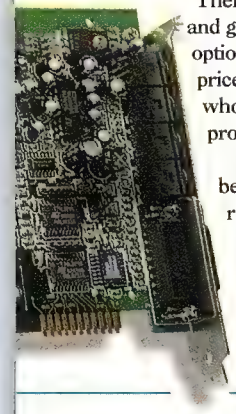
Professional Wavetable Upgrade £145
Media Vision 01494 465050

you can play audio CDs, Midi tracks and Wave files.

Special effects and the Qsound feature are adjusted through a program called AWEUTIL. This is also used to select the type of Midi emulation you wish to use. Support for all of the most popular Midi sets is available, including the 128 instruments of General Midi and the extended Roland sets,

On the subject of emulation, this card receives the best native support of any new sound card. Absolutely every new game that drops in on the *PC Home* desk carries full support for the AWE and if it doesn't, it's because the game's sound support hasn't been finished.

If you want a guarantee that this card will be of use with not only the latest software but any of your older PC titles, there is also no need to worry. The AWE contains, alongside the new sound chip, a SB16 and perfect SBPro emulation to boot.



There you have it. Creative's latest and greatest is a very tempting option, especially now that a lower priced edition is available for those who don't want to set up a professional music studio quite yet.

Now that it is shipping with better software than the original release – the early Dos Sound-Blaster emulation was a little unpredictable to say the least – it will continue to be the *de facto* sound standard for the next year or so.

sound conclusions

HAVING read these reviews you may still be completely befuddled by the apparent complexity of the sound card market. Don't worry, all you need to do is ask yourself a couple of simple questions.

First: *Do you already own a sound card?*

Now that most sound card manufacturers are producing add-on cards for users with older FM-based efforts, if you do own one of these, save some cash and buy the Gravis ACE – or WaveBlasterII if you have a SoundBlaster16 card.

For a little less than £100 this will take you into some seriously powerful audio territory, as good as both the full price Max and AWE32 in fact.

Secondly: *What do you want a sound card for?* Will you stick to simply playing games, or are you going to get stuck into some music writing, expanding the sound card's on-board memory and eventually buy a Midi instrument?

For games, Wavetable is where it's at, so unless you are completely strapped for cash, go for something like the Classic FX 3000. It's a great sounding card, has all the support standards for games and needs little maintenance once up and running.

If you would like to dive headfirst into the best audio you can get your hands on, it is only a two-horse race between the Gravis Max and Creative Lab's AWE32.

I prefer the Max because I'll never use the 28Mb facility of the AWE and its sound production is clearer when funnelled through a good hi-fi. 1Mb of on-board ram is just enough for patch-sampling and re-designing the Midi set.

profile

Product	AWE32
Price	£200 to £220
Supplier	Creative Labs
Tel	01734 344222

Summary

Fast becoming the audio standard – for those with the cash. Those without could consider the *value* edition which costs a good £60 less – but no expansion option

8

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23633 W 170p **CRYSTAL WALLS v1.0** – Animated Wallpaper
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02803 D 60p **DESERT FROG v4.0** – Classic screen saver
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25689 W 50p **DMAUD FOR WINDOWS v1.1** – Doom Audio Editor
19220 W 20p **DODGER** – Super Windows PacMan Clone
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02806 W 80p **DRAG AND ZIP v5.0** – Elegant archive manager
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08501 D 30p **DTQ v2.2** – Clever concentration game
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26973 D 120p **FAIL** – Funny & bloody driving test animation
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05637 D 30p **FIDDERLY FISK** – Demo collectors must have
15764 D 50p **FILEIT v2.0** – Simple powerful freeform database
11108 D 60p **FINTRIS v1.26** – One of the best Tetris clones
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04292 D 80p **GRAPHIC WORKSHOP v7.0E** – Image converter
22630 D 40p **GROW'EM v1.0** – Gardners guide to cuttings
15782 D 90p **GROWIT MK III** – Good gardening guide
25903 W 50p **HAC DOS v1.02** – Complete DOS reference
25904 W 50p **HAC SIMPLE v1.04** – Computers simply explained
24449 D 40p **HACKERS HANDBOOK** – Hugo Cornwall edition
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25735 D 100p **HERB POWER v3.0** – In depth colourful guide
17022 D 70p **HIDIMG v3.0** – Creates Sirds and Stereograms
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23215 D 30p **HOW CAN WE DO THIS** – Environmental issues
10664 W 40p **ICON OF TERROR** – Noisy Desktop vandal
12867 D 40p **INERTIA PLAYER 1.20** – Digital sound player
26193 D 40p **INFORMATION HIGHWAY ROADMAP** – Very useful
12005 W 40p **INFSPY v2.07** – Windows environment viewer
02469 D 60p **INTEGRITY MASTER v2.31c** – Unique anti-virus
28294 D 50p **JAPANIMATIONS VOL 1** – Ten naughty girls
16189 D 80p **JELLY BEAN FACTORY** – Unusual Tetris
08542 D 50p **JILL OF THE JUNGLE** – Wild graphic adventure
16095 W 80p **JQL POOLS PLAN v1.2** – UK football forecaster
28680 W 100p **JUKER v5.5** – Updated versatile Midi Juke Box
25704 W 170p **JUST BUTTONS v1.03** – Super Windows enhancer
26080 D 40p **KATE BUSH** – Unusual topless snapshot
10643 W 40p **K-CHESS v2.0** – Attractively designed version
26082 D 10p **K-SPEED v4.0** – Good system & disc speed tester
25253 D 70p **KABBALAH** Text of Prophecy of the Chariot
23554 D 50p **KAPTURE 3D v1.0** – 2 player action & strategy
26081 D 50p **KILLER ADS** – How to write them tutorial
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13040 W 60p **KITH & KIN v2.1** – Geneology for Windows
07215 W 20p **KYE v2.0** – Brain game with level creator
05392 D 40p **THE KORAN** – The E.H. Palmer translation
25669 D 30p **LA TOYA JACKSON** – Super centrefold shot
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23575 D 100p **LAURA BEYERS LEVEL CREATOR** – Doom DIY
08264 D 30p **LETTER ATTACK v2.0** – Childrens typing tutor
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26475 W 80p **LOTTERY MASTER v2.0** – Full featured UK system
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22637 D 40p **LOTTO CHALLENGER** – Comprehensive system
08795 D 40p **LOTTOMATIC v1.23** – Good 6/49 system
23498 W 70p **MABRY SOFTWARE MEGA PACK** – VBXs
25930 W 30p **MAGIC HEXAGONS v1.0a** – Clever brain game
05706 D 40p **MAGIC DESK v3.20** – Icon based DOS menu system
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23526 D 30p **MEAL MASTER RECIPES** – 200 Thai cuisine
26195 D 80p **MEAL MASTER RECIPES** – 1301 Chicken variations
13061 W 40p **MEDIEVAL WAR** – Many featured war game
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20368 W 20p **NINE MENS MORRIS FOR WINDOWS** – As above
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11071 D 30p **PC-CONFIG v7.30** – Informative sysinfo program
04708 D 50p **PC-DRAFT II v3.26** – Drawing and design
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17195 W 20p **PENTAMINO v1.0** – Windows game of logic
12951 D 40p **PERSONAL CHALLENGE v1.1** – General trivia
04728 D 40p **PERSONAL TAROT v3.1** – Mysteries explained
22716 D 40p **PHREAKERS MANUAL v1.1** – Old but interesting
07145 D 30p **PIANO MAN v4.0** – Compose & play for Speaker
25720 W 50p **PIGS v1.0** – Exciting game of skill & strategy
26101 D 40p **PILE-UP v3.01** –A classic multi level tetris
23280 D 120p **PLETHORA v2.1** – Awesome DOS desktop
25722 W 30p **POSTER PROGRAM v1.2** – 10 times single sheet
26106 D 30p **POWER TEST v1.10C** – Hearing & perfect pitch test
08581 D 40p **POWERCHESS v5.3** – Best DOS Chess game
19531 D 20p **PRIME - AIRFRAME** – Assembly 94 demo winner
03783 D 50p **PRINT PARTNER v3.02** – Signs, posters & banners
22726 W 50p **PSYCHIC ADVISOR** – Interesting answers
28714 W 100p **QUIZBUILDER v1.0** – Multi Media quiz maker
16549 D 70p **RACHEL'S DOLLS v2.2** – Dressing up game
25812 D 20p **RAMMER v1.01** – Possibly worlds strangest Tetris
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23960 D 40p **SHARDS v1.0** – VGA strategy & skill game
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27446 W 30p **SPIRAL v1.1** – Fascinating Fibonnaci visualisations
25670 D 50p **SPIROTRIS v1.2** – Strategy game with Snd FX
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28724 D 100p **STAR SPECK** – Amusing Star Trek parody
22754 D 20p **STONED** – Vicious virus type computer gag
04269 D 40p **STUPENDOUS v5.0** – Powerful file & disc manager
10659 W 120p **SUNSHINE v4.05** – DOS & Windows tutorial
04581 D 150p **TELEMATE v4.12** – Superb comm program
18007 W 40p **TERMINATOR** – Amazing Windows Saver
27499 D 70p **THINKING IN C++** – Masses of useful source code
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17156 D 40p **TREK GURU** – Trek enthusiasts info database
22013 D 40p **TREKKER TT FONTS** – Three Treckie type fonts
05389 D 50p **TURBO PASCAL TUTORIAL v2.6** – 20 lessons
11270 D 30p **TUTOR MASTER v1.0** – Beginners DOS tutorial
00083 D 80p **TOTOR.COM v6.2** – Comprehensive DOS turorial
24325 D 100p **TWISTED EXISTENCE** – Brilliantly weird demo
22661 D 50p **UFO REPRTS** – Much fairly recent material
24413 D 80p **UK CLUB MEMBERSHIP** – For club organisers
15989 W 60p **VB TIPS & TRICKS v2.1** – Hints & code
25992 D 30p **VECTOR PRO v1.1** – C & C++ Maths library
22155 D 100p **VIRUSCAN v2.2.0 (MCAFEE)** – Scans & cleans
25331 D 40p **WADMAN v1.01** – Convert 1.X Doom stuff to 2.0
26283 D 80p **WARLOCK SCREEN EDITOR v1.12** – Brill
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11952 D 40p **YOUR ESP TEST v1.4** – Find out with this test
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26157 D 10p **YPNONIC** – Configureable hypnotic screen saver
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Novel ideas
Turn to page 143 for some great hints and tips on getting your purple prose published

Word for word

Professional wordprocessors can cost a lot of money – but are they the last word? Andy Shaw checks out the budget end to see if they compete with the best

WORDPROCESSING is one of those applications the PC was made for. However, some of the high-end packages such as Microsoft Word are incredibly meaty both in terms of features and price. Many of the options are superfluous to people who need nothing more than to output a few letters. I mean, who really uses things like grammer correction when writing that much cherished and all too rare letter home to mum?

So what else is there for the average home user?

Apart from the very limited Windows Write that comes with all machines that run Windows – enough to put anyone off wordprocessing for life – what are the options?

Surprisingly enough there is plenty of choice and at incredibly competitive prices.

The rise in the number of PCs at home has left a market of people who just need a reliable piece of software that has all the functions they need without any of the specialist and occasionally over-the-top features that push the price through the roof.

So if you are in the market for something that is going to cost you less than £100, why not check out the best in the budget scene?

Windows options

Word for word

WordStar for Windows 2.0

WORDSTAR is touted as a blend of DTP and wordprocessing. To a certain extent this is true, basically because the frame-based nature of the product allows simple manipulation of both text and graphics within a document.

Installation is simple, allowing a variety of options for selecting just the features you need. Fully set up with all its features, the package will take up about 16Mb of hard disk space

MailList is a built in database which you can use to store names and addresses of people, possibly for a mailmerge in the future. It will import data from most popular database formats.

The spellchecker – one of the most important features in a wordprocessor as far as I'm concerned – is pretty good except for technical words and abbreviations.

The grammar checker is among the best I've come across and, as is the case with most decent Windows applications at the moment, the toolbox is completely customisable.

You can get rid of any buttons which are not needed and move the toolbar from the top of the screen to the side or even have it floating.

Should you be looking for a wordprocessor that also allows a modicum of design work, such as laying out newsletters, as well as providing a simple-to-use Windows package to suit a £50 or so budget, WordStar is particularly useful.

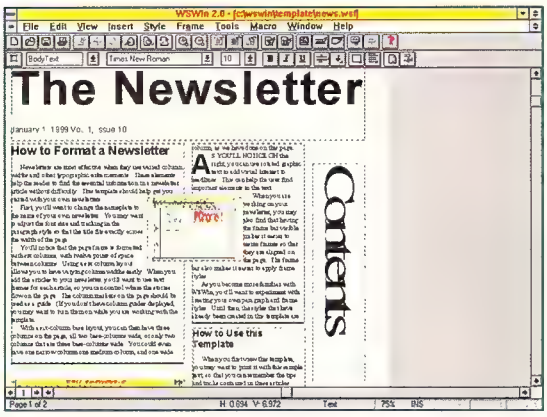
profile

Product	WordStar for Windows 2.0
Price	£49.95
Format	Floppy
Supplier	Softkey
Tel	0181-789 2000

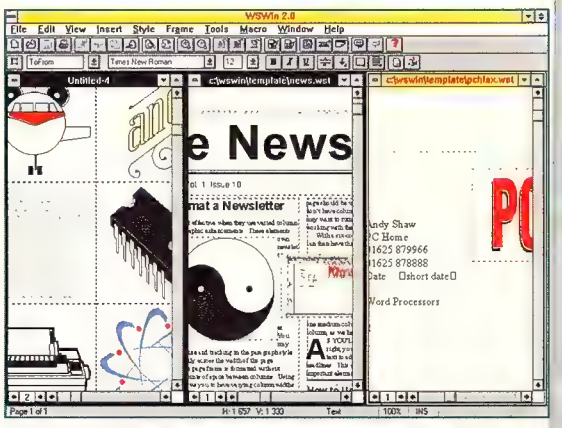
Summary

Windows product, frame based for newsletter layouts. Excellent for the price, but the spellchecker could be a little bit better

8



With its use of frames for everything including text, WordStar is practically a desktop publishing package to



As with all the Windows wordprocessors WordStar can have several windows open simultaneously

Fine Words

WOULDN'T it be great if there was a wordprocessor that could take normal words and make them into *fine words*?

Despite this package's name, it doesn't actually do this, but it does have many of the functions that should allow you to present written text properly.

It is something of a mini suite of software, as also included are a simple database and a charting program.

This makes it easy to include diagrammatic representations of figures and mailmerge directly without having to resort to other companies' versions.

All these applications can be brought up side by side in their own windows so that information can be easily cut and pasted from one to the next.

Presentation isn't quite as swish as, say, WordStar. However, if you should have to do any kind of work in a foreign language, Fine Words has a handy utility for customising a key at the bottom of the screen for letters with accents and the like.

It is possible to change this for a variety of foreign languages and symbols which can be used with the Ctrl and number keys.

The spellchecker is a big no no. The biggest problem is that it didn't pick up an American spelling I slipped into my test document. It also tripped up on technological stuff and abbreviations. Basically, if you write anything even vaguely technical you'll have a lot of teaching to do. Likewise bad spelling or Americanisation could cause trouble.

This is a good wordprocessor at a reasonable price, especially if you are thinking of looking to tie your work in with charting and database software.

However, it is let down by the spellchecker. This balances out the good points, unless you are confident enough about your spelling and typing.

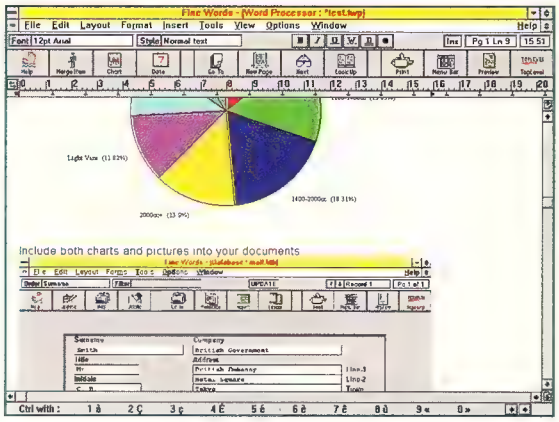
profile

Product	Fine Words
Price	£39
Format	Floppy
Supplier	Toplevel
Tel	01453 753955

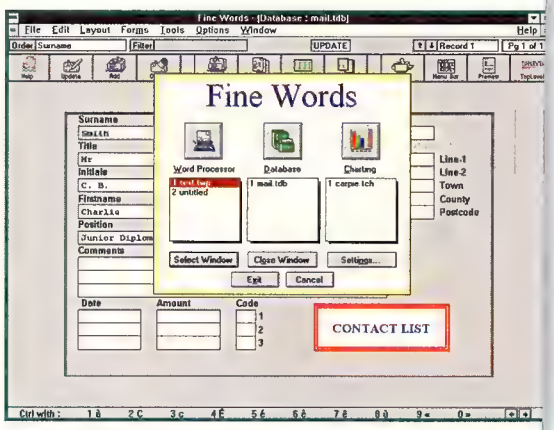
Summary

Handy database and chart software built in at good price. However the spellchecker is American and over-rides the good points

6



Fine Words has database and charting software built in to make it simple to integrate them into a document



Upon launching the software you can choose any of the three applications to work in

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Word for word

AmiPro 3.1

BEST BUY PC HOME

I WAS instantly impressed by this excellent, value-for-monsy wordprocessor, which only just made it into this round-up, at just under £100.

It produced the best file conversion from my Word for Windows 6 documents, even maintaining special effects like pictures, captions and page numbers inserted as a rather cruel little test.

None of the other packages competed well enough to be worthy of a mention. The best thing about AmiPro is its ease of use.

The toolbar automatically splits between the top and the bottom of the window, with the usual file management, printing, cutting and pasting options at the top and special buttons for stuff like fonts at the bottom.

This is particularly handy as having the options spread around the screen and not all clustered in one location or hidden in menus makes life a lot easier.

Many of the menus at the top of the screen are multilayered. Choose text alignment, for example, and you will be presented with a sub menu containing the options like left, right, centre or justify.

The comprehensive manual looks a little daunting at first because it is fat, but unless you really need to get into setting up frames and so on you shouldn't need to refer to it.

It has the air of a reference guide rather than a step-by-step tutorial. The online help is also excellent.

Coupled with an excellent spellchecker, this package's ease of use and spread of features makes it the best wordprocessor of the bunch.

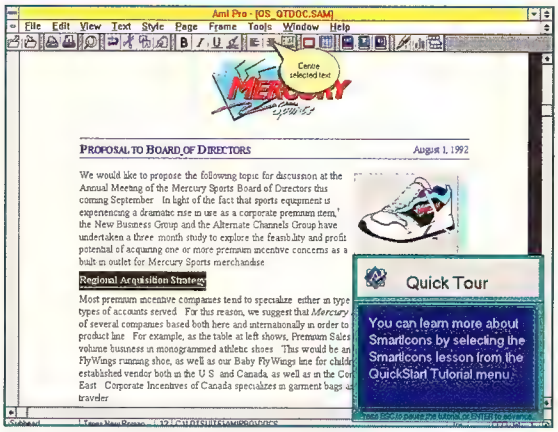
profile

Product	AmiPro 3.1
Price	£99
Format	Floppy
Supplier	Lotus
Tel	01784 455445

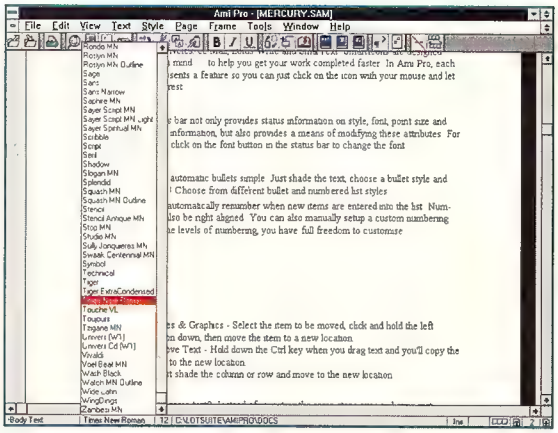
Summary

Solid wordprocessor, easy to use and links with other Lotus applications. But one of the more expensive options in this roundup

10



Everything in AmiPro seems set up to help you as unobtrusively as possible



The toolbars across the bottom of AmiPro make life simple – just click on them to change things

Q&A Write

COMING on only two disks and taking up just 4Mb when fully installed, this is a wordprocessor you may want to think seriously about if you want a Windows package but hard drive space is somewhat limited.

It's another wordprocessor that has taken the frame method of controlling everything other than plain text from the desktop publishing family. Although most typing takes place in the usual large window, graphics and special text like headlines for newsletters can be framed up separately and moved around the page independently.

They can be altered or have special effects applied in a special frame editor accessed by a double click on the relevant frame. This makes otherwise quite difficult operations like laying out newsletters, very simple.

Importing facilities work almost as well as AmiPro, the only problem being that a difficult graphic I put in wasn't aligned properly and the page number also slipped to the left instead of being central.

This isn't a problem – centering a picture is certainly easier than re-importing it into the document would have been.

In general, it's not particularly highly featured but is probably perfect for the small user as it keeps things like manuals and technical difficulties to the absolute minimum.

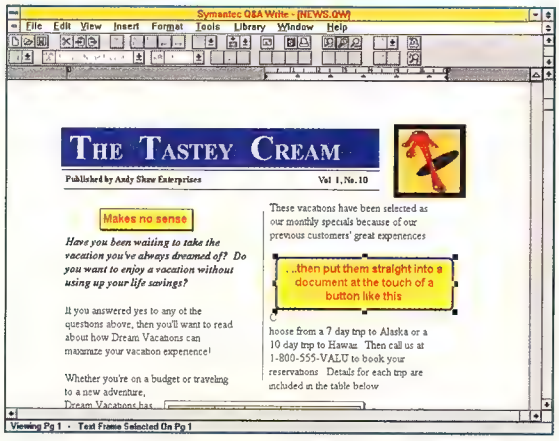
profile

Product	Q&A Write
Price	£69
Format	Floppy
Supplier	Symantec
Tel	01628 592222

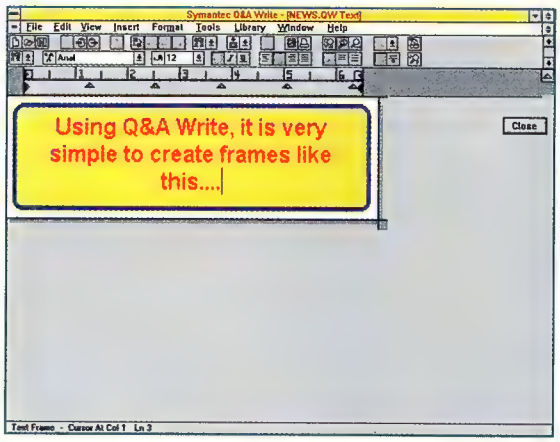
Summary

Small but very well formed. Takes up very little space on hard disk. Lacking in some features and a bit expensive for what's available

7



There is a handy method for creating titles and headlines in frames in Q&A Write



Click on a frame to get into the text effect box for items such as style and alignment

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shareware options

Word for word

StarWriter

OF all the shareware wordprocessors this is the one that looked most promising. On loading, you notice groovy things like floating option windows that stay open on top of what you are doing, just like some desktop publishing packages.

Some superb options include the ability to create tables of contents and an index – facilities that aren't available in some commercial packages. It even has a version of AutoCorrect, usually found in Microsoft Word, that works equally well.

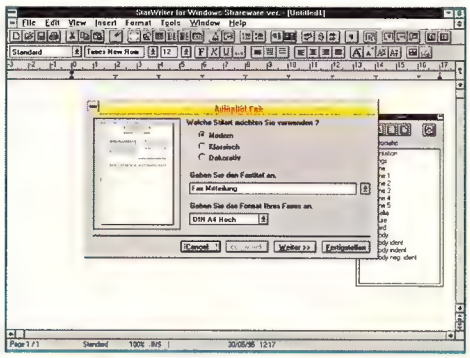
You only really need these features if you are attempting to produce large and professional looking documents.

To find them on a package you can try out as shareware first is very satisfying. The biggest problem with this wordprocessor is that the shwareware version is German.

This is not a major problem but it does have the equivalents of automatic Wizards for building things like fax sheets or standard letters. Unless you are bilingual you may have a bit of trouble understanding exactly what goes where. Still, it gives a good idea of what's available if you register an English language version.

This package is really for the shareware purchaser who is going to use a wordprocessor a lot throughout the course of its life. It will support many high-end functions, but you pay for it when it comes down to disk space and cost to register. However, if you need the power it's all there.

CompuServe
01272 255111
7



StarWriter features AutoPilots. Unfortunately, this shareware version uses them in German

DEMO

WordExpress

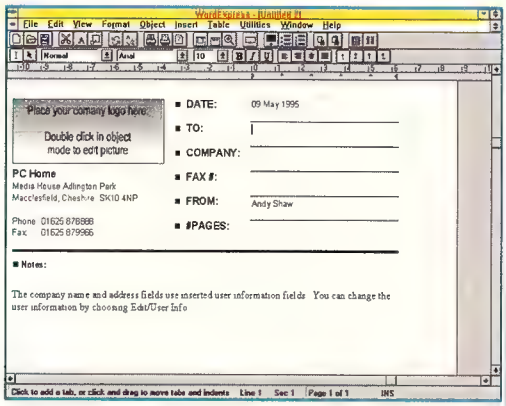
THE quality of shareware wordprocessors has improved over the last few years, with many Windows packages being at least as good as their budget priced counterparts.

Of course, once you've registered there's not a lot of difference in terms of price, but the ability to try before you buy can be invaluable. You can test all the shareware wordprocessors reviewed here as they are all available on our MegaCD-Rom.

WordExpress is a pretty standard job, with all the options you would expect from a decent piece of software. The shareware version comes with an American spellchecker and no thesaurus until you register.

The table editor is probably about the most sophisticated of the insert functions, though you can also add pictures and other cut or copied things from other Windows applications.

All in all this is a fine wordprocessor, and should suit most users as long as they don't expect shareware to be quite the equal of something like AmiPro.



Templates are featured for jobs like faxes and letterheads

Thompson Partnership
01889 564601
7

DEMO on CD and HD

Galaxy

IF you find yourself with a slightly slower machine, especially one that doesn't run Windows or doesn't run it fast enough to look after high-end Windows packages, Dos packages are for you.

There is also the option of shareware such as Galaxy. It uses standard Dos text mode, though for those who usually use Windows, there is a handy menu at the top which you can use via the mouse or the Alt key.

This comes with most of the same headings in most of the same positions as you would find them in a Windows package.

Ask any serious writer and you'll be told that function and short-cut keys are the real way to use a wordprocessor, but anyone who likes the rodent will insist on having the old menus across the top as an option.

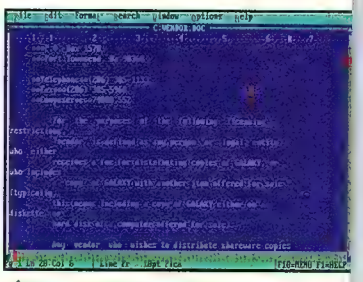
There are plenty of basic features like a spellchecker and a thesaurus, though both are disabled in the shareware version. If you're not confident about your word skills then registering is essential.

The lack of a wysiwyg display makes life a little hard when attempting to make things like long layout dependant documents.

It really means that some kind of mathematical visualisation is handy so you can see what 1.25 inch margins are going to look like around an A4 sheet.

However, this is a perfectly functional Dos wordprocessor. It doesn't have facilities that some may come to expect from the software nowadays but for a little PC used by someone who just has to knock out a few letters occasionally, it could really fit the bill.

PDSL
01892 663298
6



Galaxy is a simple but effective Dos wordprocessor with a familiar interfa

DEMO

LocoScript Pro 2 Plus

COMMERCIAL Dos wordprocessors are getting increasingly few and far between as everybody moves to the glamorous Windows market with its vague promises of complete drag and drop capability and communication between applications. There is no denying that Dos software has a reputation of being hideously ugly to live up to as well.

Unfortunately, LocoScript Pro doesn't do much to dispel this myth – from the installation to the final program, everything looks really ugly. Locomotive Software have attempted to get over this with a new font, but it still looks horrible.

LocoScript is supposed to be an easy way for Amstrad PCW owners to transfer to the PC, as it features a very similar interface. I'll probably get hate mail for saying this but frankly it makes me extremely glad I never had a PCW as the menus are not particularly logical and don't feel right.

This is one of those things that you're are going to get over very quickly with regular use but it still made me twitch a bit as I was attempting to discover functions.

The software also loads up with a file manager so that you can find your way around your documents. Compared to the file managers most Windows PC users are used to this is somewhat unwieldy

Probably the handiest part of this is the integrated database software which allows for mailmerging and the like. Considering you are using Dos, this could prove invaluable if you have a great number of envelopes or form letters to print simply because integration with an external package can prove particularly difficult.

If you need a Dos wordprocessor with lots of features and a good link to a database this is a good choice, though it doesn't really compare to a similar Windows package.

▲ *LocoScript features its own file manager so you can easily find files across the directory structure*

profile

Product	LocoScript Professional 2 Plus
Price	£99
Format	Floppy
Supplier	Locomotive Software
Tel	01306 740606

Summary

Fully featured but has a non-standard Dos interface. Good for ex-PCW users

5

PC Easy

RATHER than being a fully-fledged word-processor in its own right this is a cut-down version of LocoScript.

It has the same look and feel which unfortunately means it appears really nasty to the eye though it is 100 per cent compatible for those who can see the possibility of an upgrade in the near future.

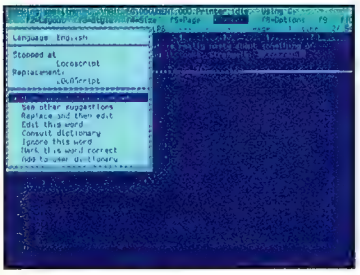
Basically this offers all the things you might expect from a Dos wordprocessor but made that little bit easier to use.

Having said that, it features a fairly non-standard interface which is fine if you've never used a wordprocessor before, but if you have it might be a better idea to go for something like Galaxy which should allow you to translate ready-made skills easily.

Like its big brother, PC Easy features a simple database that can be used for mailmerges and so on. For a wordprocessor that will run on any 512k AT and above, this really isn't bad going.

If you are new to the world of wordprocessing and are likely to stay with Dos for quite some time, at least you know you have an assured upgrade path.

However, if Windows is just around the corner, the non-standard environment could prove more of a hindrance than a help in the future.



▲ *PC Easy comes with most of the functions you would expect to see, including a spellchecker*

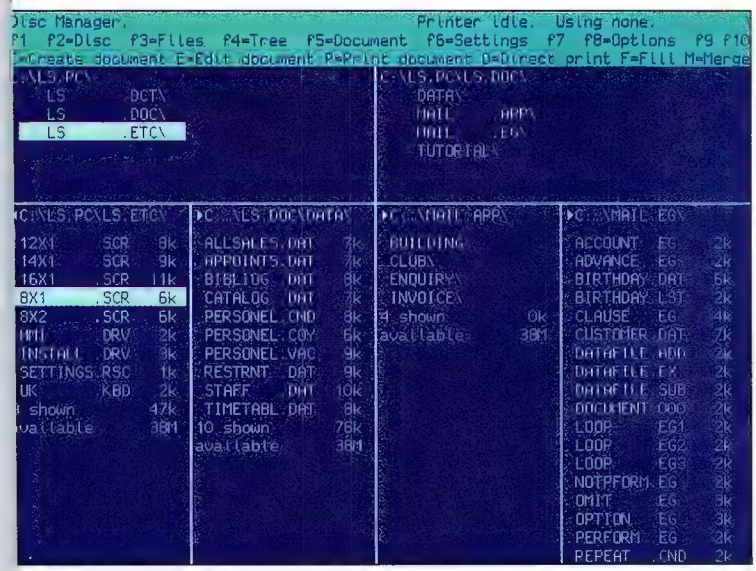
profile

Product	PC Easy
Price	£39.95
Format	Floppy
Supplier	Locomotive Software
Tel	01306 740606

Summary

Non-standard Dos interface could cause problems to anyone who is familiar with other wordprocessors

6



▲ *PC Easy looks very similar to LocoScript but it is slightly cut down to make a good intro to Dos word processing*

the last word

IF you are a Windows user I would recommend you go for Ami Pro for the high end user or Q&A Write for the part timers who want pure simplicity. Both feature good functionality, with AmiPro delivering that bit more but at a price compared to something at the opposite end like Q&A.

On the other hand, if you require specific features like, for example, WordStar's excellent frame-based interface for DTP type work, you should consider alternatives.

If you are a religious Dos user, both the Locomotive products are acceptable for their respective prices. The ability to integrate with the database options are highly recommended.

However, if Dos is just a passing phase, or something you're stuck with until you can afford to upgrade, go for the shareware package Galaxy as it is far more like what you will be using in the future.

Of the Windows shareware, Word Express is much easier to use, if anything because everything is in our language. StarWrite does have more in the way of features, but many of these are pretty much just excess weight when it comes to the average user. ■

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GAMES

Novel ideas

Chris Jones explains the delights and dilemmas of writing and printing a book on your PC

IT'S a funny thing, but ever since I wrote my first book, almost everyone I have come into contact with tells me how they hope to get work published. Maybe it's intrinsic to the human condition but it does appear that most people feel the need to commit themselves to print, be it a local guide, a kiddies' story, cookbook or rip roaring steamy thriller. I've met them all.

In the 1980s, desktop publishing revolutionised the way companies made up flyers and pamphlets. No longer did it all have to go to an expensive design agency followed by the typesetters and printers – it could all be done with a PC, printer and photocopier. Since then, PCs have become more powerful, printers better and storage media cheaper. The upshot is that it is now possible to produce a book on your desktop.

In all honesty, ever since the advent of the basic wordprocessor and DTP package, it has been possible to do this, but its the plethora of new gadgets that makes it all so easy and professional looking.

The single piece of kit that has made the whole process accessible is the 600dpi laser printer. This produces very high quality text and images that hold up even under the closest of scrutiny.

resolve this

STANDARD 300 dpi is good, but when examined, jagged and coarse images are all too apparent. The best thing about a 600 dpi printer is that the page it spits out can be sent off to the printers and, well, printed. That's it!

I have written a book which is to be published later this year. It's a guide to film production in the UK which has taken nearly two years to compile and edit.

In the first instance, it was in some ways a project. As they say in the publishing trade, it was a *vanity* publication – I was doing it for my own selfish and egotistical reasons and had not researched the marketplace. "publish and be damned", I cried!

I have since discovered that my book does have a market, but it did raise the ugly question of commercial viability.

If you are about to embark upon a book project, it is vital that you know in your heart whether it is a *vanity* publication or something that would actually find a place on the shelves of a bookshop.

There's no use in printing up thousands of books if all they are going to do is keep the car out of your garage – and believe me, I know several authors who have garage warehouses of previous flops. If you know that it isn't going to be a best seller, you can still publish but not incur a great deal of unnecessary costs.

Think about it: Uncle Albert's

cover concerns

THE cover is an interesting point, but even this is no longer a problem. With image retouching and graphic layout software like the excellent PagePlus suite, a full colour cover can be produced.

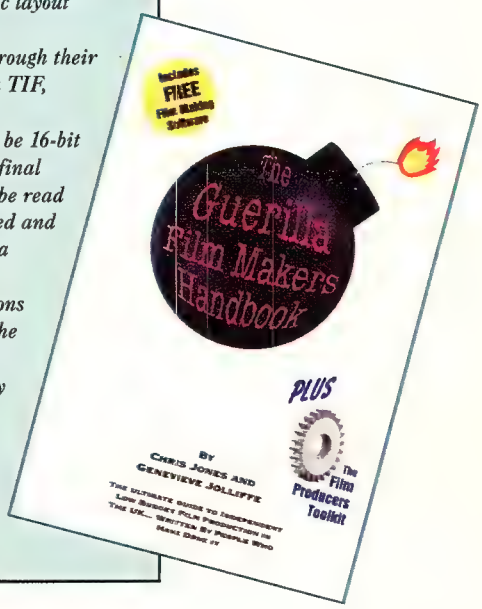
For a short run and if you don't have a colour printer, most copy shops can take a disk and output it through their laser photocopier. Instead of saving your design as a native file – .CDR or .PPP and so on – export it as a TIF, ideally in 256 colours.

If there are photo images it may need to be 16-bit or 24-bit and that will greatly increase the final image size. Your disk will more than likely be read by a Macintosh before the files are converted and sent to the colour laser printer. Hey presto, a colour cover!

For a professional result, colour separations will once more be needed. Remember that the cover is your only point of sale. It would be advisable to let a professional design agency handle this as they will undoubtedly have some fresh and experienced ideas.

Getting the buyer to take the book off the shelf and look at it is the job of the cover, and quite often what you think is a good one may not be sufficiently seductive.

The image for the cover of my book – designed in CorelDRAW then exported as a Windows Metafile into Pagemaker



Novel ideas

One of the major reasons for using Pagemaker 5 is that it is an industry standard for books and the files can be read by both PC and Mac

stories about World War II may be mesmerising to you, indeed, the whole family would love to read it as a book – but would anybody else? Or more to the point, would anyone pay money to read it?

A paperback novel is by far the easiest book to produce and it could be put together in a wordprocessor like Word for Windows and output on a laser or deskjet before sending off to the printers for duplication.

If only a short print run is required, it would be very easy to photocopy it – most good copy shops would be able handle this, plus trim it down to size and even bind it for a matter of a few pounds – then, you're in print!

If your printer is only 300dpi, produce everything at 200 per cent and get it reduced at the printers/copy shop. This would give you a final print of 600dpi resolution – nice and crisp.

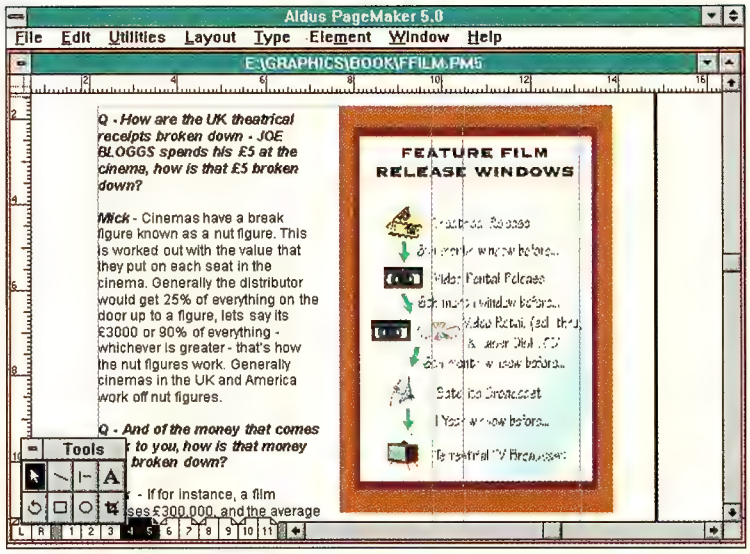
Check in advance what reduction percentages can be used. Most printers can handle anything that is reasonable but some also like to stick to rigorous figures like 141 per cent.

Pagemaker will print out your final copy at any chosen percentage and will include printers' marks – what a printer uses to line everything up and ultimately trim it down to size. These marks are vital if the page is to be trimmed at a later point.

▲ *A good example of photo retouching – in the original there was only one helicopter. I used Photoshop to add the others*

It is unlikely that book shops will take this kind of publication. They will be looking for *professional* quality in terms of printing and binding. If the pro market is where you are headed, step up a gear.

Local guide books are another firm favourite for low volume, high profile printing – these could stay black and white, but unlike the novel, would contain many images, both photographic and graphical – such as Windows Meta Files ● .WMF.



▲ *Creative use of clipart – Windows Metafiles in close up*

Traditionally, the photographic images would be supplied as hard copy for the printers to scan in at the time of printing, but this produces two problems:

● The book cannot be printed out and viewed in advance

● There is no way to take advantage of photo retouching or montage which really can bring images to life.

High quality flatbed scanners are now becoming very cheap – around £400 – but if you can't afford one, consider putting all images on Kodak Photo CD down at Boots – cost £17 – before importing them into the layout software.

When dropping graphics into Pagemaker, it gives you the option to embed the image or simply to link the image file into the document. The advantage of embedding is that the image is an integral part of the file and cannot be lost on your hard disk or forgotten at the time of printing – if data has been exchanged between computers.

The disadvantage is that the file sizes can get huge – 20 to 50Mb even 100Mb. I produced some tests, scanning images in black and white at around 200dpi in greyscales. When printed they looked superb and I continued to produce all the images in my book at this size and quality which seemed to be a good trade off between file size and quality. However, I would recommend making your own tests with the printers of your choice.

Full colour is also an option: Easy to achieve but expensive to print and the photographic images can become absolutely vast to store.

Most graphics packages produce what are called separations – a series of black and white pages where each page represents a primary colour. When combined at the printers, this would create full colour. However, this really is at the cutting edge of technology and could prove prohibitively expensive for a *home grown* publication.

colour option

THE other options for low volume colour printing is to buy a colour printer – personalised children's books are ideal for this sort of process and could provide a delightful birthday present for your kids.

Whatever type of book you eventually decide to go for, I would urge you to go to the book shop to see what the competition is doing. Look at sizes, layouts and styles – there is no copyright on a *style* so steal from the best.

Photo CD libraries and clipart CDs are now very cheap and often a superb source of high-quality, royalty-free images. It is amazing how a few carefully selected pieces of clipart can turn a boring page of text into a well designed layout that jumps out at the reader.

The actual page dimensions are also important. All printers produce their books on very large sheets of paper before cutting them up. If you are not careful, your page could be

two or three millimetres too wide and would ultimately halve the amount that would fit on one of their huge sheets – thus, it could almost double the printing charges.

Printers also like to divide the book up into sections of say 16 or 32 pages. This will vary between printers, but it could make a considerable difference to the way your final publication is costed. So work out the number of pages in multiples of 16.

your layout

BY far, the most professional and trouble-free method, especially with complex images and layout, is to do all the layout on your PC, print it out and bind it, get it proof read, make all the changes needed from the proof reading, then supply the native Pagemaker files to the printers with a hard copy print out to check against.

The printers can then output it to 1200dpi bromide film and print it. Sound simple? Well it can be, but it can also be fraught with problems.

One of the major reasons for using Pagemaker 5 is that it is an industry standard and the files can be read by both PC and Mac. Traditionally, Macs have dominated the publishing and printing market and there isn't any indication that they are losing their grip.

Another problem is that of data storage. How on earth do you get 200Mb of data to the printers? Many bureaux or printers will take a wide variety of storage media, SyQuest being the most popular, but CD is hot on its heels. Either way, some storage medium will be needed, even if it is the very low priced Iomega 250mb tape streamer which could then be dumped on to CD at a bureau.

The one area that constantly catches people out is that of fonts – it is vital to supply the printer with all the fonts used in your book. A good printer will then convert these, or will already have on disk the very same fonts which will have been converted to or from the Mac.

If you are in doubt, go to the printers in advance and ask what fonts they would recommend. They will have vast libraries and you will be able to buy the very same fonts from Adobe for instance.

This rules out the possibilities of font mismatch, which could completely ruin your layout. I managed to find a London-based printer who could handle all my problems, even the font conversions. I ran some tests and was utterly delighted with the results.

Getting your bookon to the

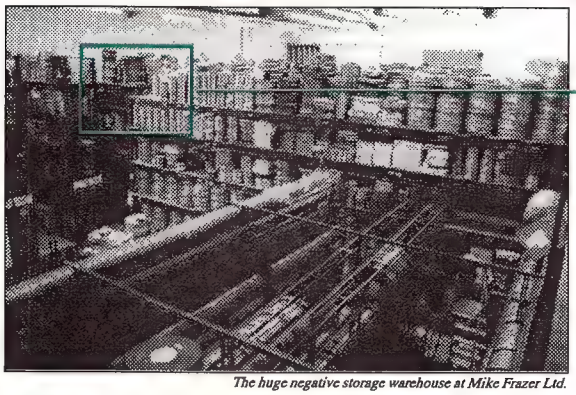
costing

IN terms of costing, if your book is very hot, you may find a publisher who will take it off your hands – but this is certainly the exception and not the rule.

Quality of paper, number of pages, quality of binding, inclusion of any colour are all variables that will effect the outcome of any costings.

The cheapest type of book is, without doubt, the paperback novel – poor quality paper, poorly bound and with very small pages. A run of, say, 2,000 could cost less than £1,000 to produce, whereas a full blown high quality

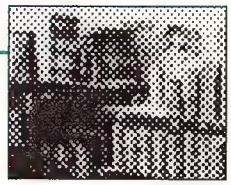
Chapter 5 - Anatomy Of A Movie



The huge negative storage warehouse at Mike Frazer Ltd.

Mike - The most important thing is for the neg cutter and the editor to sit down and talk about how he's going to do it. We're talking film editing now, the way the cutting copy is marked up is vital, because that is the information so it must be marked up in either a standard way or a way the neg cutter understands the editors markings.

With non-linear editing you do not have a film cutting copy to check against.



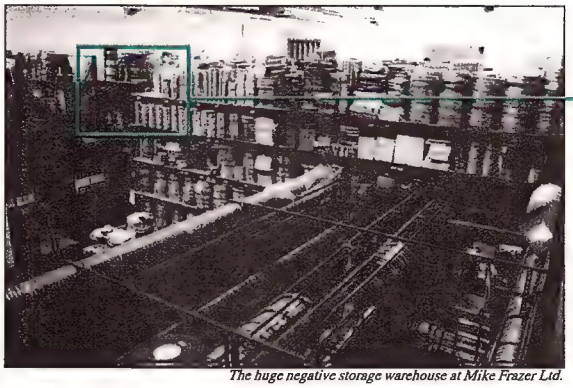
▲ *Notice the difference between 300dpi...*

publication with only a few colour pages in the centre could come in nearer the £10,000 mark!

If you can charge £20 a copy, which you can if the book is of high enough quality, the whole project could actually make good money. Deals can be done with all printers, and remember always to ask for a written quote.

If these figures scare you off, then 50 copies for £100 at the copy shop is

Chapter 5 - Anatomy Of A Movie



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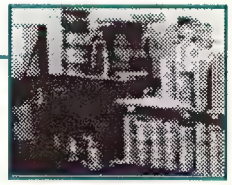


▲ *...and 600dpi high resolution. Both these examples have been enlarged by 200 per cent*

probably your best option. And always haggle for a deal if you can pay cash – at least 25 per cent discount.

At all stages it is vital to keep in contact with the printers – if half way down the line they tell you there is a problem, that becomes your problem which will undoubtedly cost time and money.

Novel ideas

shelves can be a bit of a trudge. Certainly WH Smiths and John Menzies buy local books direct for all their stores, and the smaller book shops and chains often buy direct, which means you will have to visit each one – or get an agent to do so on your behalf. All these people take slices off the top, thus reducing your potential profits.

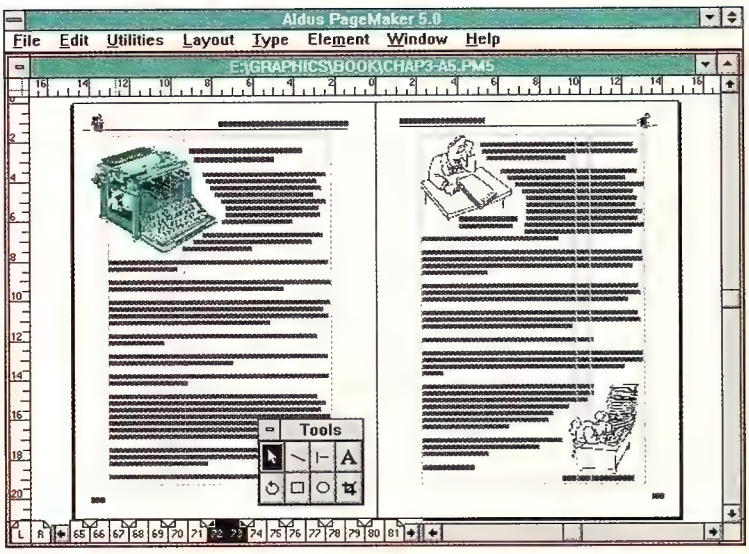
Another excellent way to sell is through mail order. If you have a specialist publication, give pages away free for publication to magazines in that field, give radio and press interviews and, wherever possible, get a small cut out coupon printed with your feature so that people can just fill it in and send a cheque. If you sell direct you get 100 per cent of the sale instead of anything between 25 and 60 per cent in the bookshops.

Book production is both fun and rewarding, not to mention the possibilities of generating another source of income. The future holds many new and exciting developments. Digital books more like multimedia presentations can already be produced with ease, as can publications on the world wide web of the Internet.

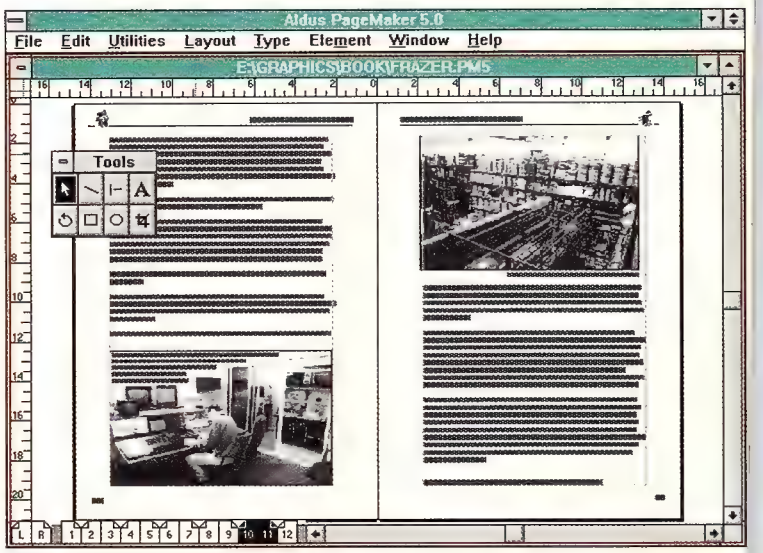
For the time being, paper remains the industry standard and committing yourself to it and getting your work on to the book shelves is a fabulously exciting process.

It could all be the beginning of a satisfying new career, or the end of a misconceived idea. The only upside is that if it all goes wrong, you'll never be stuck for Christmas presents for the next 25 years! But hey, what am I saying? It's going to be a roaring success, so publish and be damned! ■

If you sell direct you get 100 per cent of the sale instead of anything between 25 and 60 per cent in the bookshops



▲ *Text and images: Use of clipart from a CD-Rom can pep up dull text*



▲ *The original page, also shown printed out at 300 and 600dpi on the previous page*

diy desktop

THERE are inherent advantages to producing a book on your desktop: You can avoid the expense of layout and master page printing charges, you can lay it out how you like it, print it out as a master and even bind it up to pass round friends for proof reading.

Many packages on the market are capable of this but, without doubt, the most suitable is Adobe Pagemaker v5 or its little brother the inexpensive Pagemaker Classic – which pretty much appears to be Pagemaker v4 with few enhancements.

Sure, CorelDRAW, QuarkXPress or Page Plus can handle it, but Pagemaker was designed for book production. It automates many of the functions of book production and will even generate a table of contents and detailed index.

Certain things cannot be done easily, like adjusting text widths and heights or bending text around a curve. At first, this seems a little frustrating, but the deeper you get, the more you realise that it has been designed actively to stop people creating problems for themselves when it comes to transporting the complete file to the printers.

Pagemaker is designed as a layout tool and not as a graphics package. Anything other than straight text is best created elsewhere and then imported in as an independent element.

jargon buster

DPI	*Dots per inch – measure of print quality. The higher the number, the greater is the resolution*
.CDR	*The file format of CorelDRAW. Unless you specify otherwise, files will be saved with this extension*
.PPP	*The file format of PagePlus. Unless you specify otherwise, files will be saved with this extension*
.TIF	*Tagged image farmat. A high-quality format most often found on the Apple Macintosh*
.WMF	*Windows Metafile. A Windows specific vector (line) graphic file format*
Greyscale	*Using various shades – usually 256 – between black and white to avoid dithering mono pictures*
Photo CD	*A Kodak file format especially for storing photographic images on CD-Rom*
Bromide	*A photographic medium for producing text and graphic layouts before creating printer's plates*
Fonts	*Text styles. Each font is named and may range from being very fancy to quite plain*
Separations	*All colours to be printed are split in four – cyan, magenta, yellow and black – for processing*

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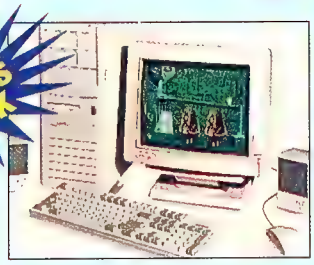

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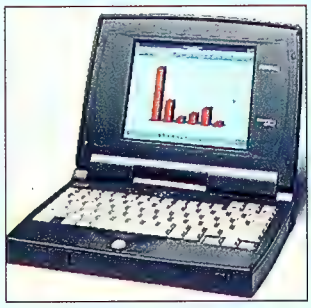

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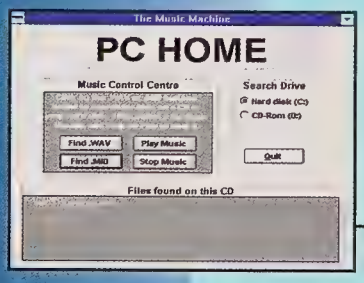

more speed 152
Prepare for Windows 95: Make your PC bigger, faster and much more powerful

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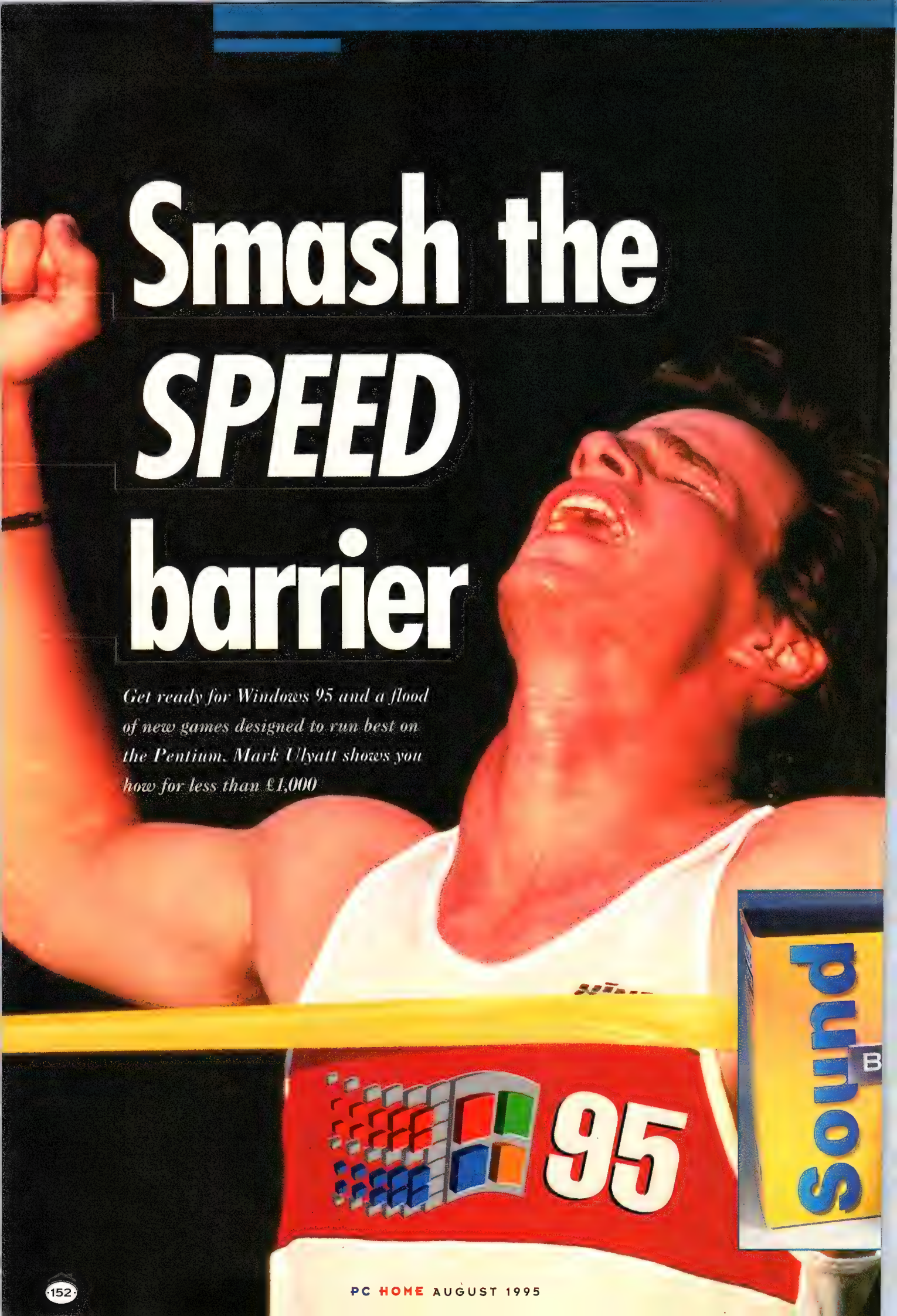
How Chris Jones got to tinkle the ivories using his PC as instructor and tester

Smash the SPEED barrier

Get ready for Windows 95 and a flood of new games designed to run best on the Pentium. Mark Ulyatt shows you how for less than £1,000



YOU'D have to have been living on another planet for the last year not to have been hit by the hype about Microsoft's new version of its Windows graphical user interface. It is designed to run faster, it'll have many more features, and will almost make the Dos prompt obsolete for some users.

What's more, a lot of time and effort has been put into the design of the user interface so that it is friendlier and easier to use. Is it really as good as it has been hyped up to be? Lance Concannon's review on page 122 should give you a clearer view.

Not only are we about to undergo a major revision of the user interface we love (but often curse!), but many exciting new games are being released which run much better on Pentium PCs than they do on old 386s or 486s.

The sheer processing power of the Pentium has enabled game designers to add extra features, such as more detail in background scenery, or smoother animation, to the latest entertainment software.

These extra features are turned on only if a Pentium chip is detected. If you're a 486 owner (or worse!), you'll have to suffer slow and jerky gameplay and plain graphics.

Windows 95 and a Pentium processor are two absolute *must-haves* this summer whether you are into games or more serious work. Like me, you may have already come to this conclusion, but if your bank balance is anything like the state of mine a week after pay-day, you'll wonder how you're going to afford the £1,500 or more for a state of the art Pentium.

Before you sign away your life and home on an HP policy, take time out to consider upgrading. It's not really that difficult and it is certainly a whole lot cheaper. In the following pages I have described my experiences of upgrading, which apart from a few minor problems that were soon solved, I achieved even though I'm no technical boffin. If I can do it, I'm sure most of you can.

A PC is constructed from a couple of dozen different components - a case, keyboard, monitor, floppy disk drive, hard disk, motherboard, memory chips, processor, cables and connectors, power supply and so on.

When you buy a new PC you get the whole lot and it costs and arm and a leg. When you upgrade you still use your old keyboard, case, monitor, cables, floppy disk drive, power supply and so on. Just think of the savings you'll make!

The cost of big hard drives is falling rapidly and 1Gb models are now close to £200

The Spea Showtime is a combined high performance video card and MPEG video playback board

Pentium picking

AFTER dismantling my old PC I was left with the empty case. My first decision was what was I going to put back into it? Obviously it had to be a Pentium, but which? I could discount some immediately. The P66 costs more than a P60, but isn't that much quicker, and the P100 and faster Pentiums are still too new for my liking. This left a P60, P75 and P90. I eventually chose the P90 – in for a penny as they say.

Since I had picked the best CPU, some of my other decisions were made for me. The motherboard had to be the now standard PCI, and since I seemed to be on a bigger is better binge I chose a huge 1Gb hard drive. If you want to save some money though, a 500Mb drive is under £150.

While I had wanted to use a single 8Mb SIMM, to save some money, in the end I had to get two since the Pentium addresses SIMMs in pairs and I didn't want to use up two SIMM slots with just 4Mb apiece.

For the best performance my graphics card was going to be a PCI model, but the choice between a normal SVGA card such as the

The AWE32 is a great sound card, but it is also big. Make sure you have sufficient room for it

TOP TIP

The PC's memory comes in the form of SIMMs – small circuit boards that plug into special sockets. You may find that the SIMMs in your old motherboard are unsuitable for your new one as there are several different varieties – 30-pin, 72-pin, parity-checked and non-parity checked, 1, 2, 4, 8 and 16Mb configurations. Check with your motherboard supplier

Smash the SPEED barrier

popular Diamond Stealth and the Spea Showtime – which has built in MPEG video playback capabilities – was more difficult.

In the end I opted for the Showtime. Although it is much more expensive, by about £150, it increases the PC's capabilities enormously, and being PCI would still deal with heavy duty graphics programs very easily.

For a sound card the only option was a SoundBlaster. These are now pretty much the standard, and the programs that do not provide SB sound are few and far between. Again bigger is usually better, so the awesome SB AWE32 was the only option for me.

Similarly the new CD-Rom drive had to be a modern quad speed unit. The price difference between the double and quad is so small now that going for quad will cost very little extra.

A big decision was whether to go for a SCSI hard disk and CD-Rom drive system or the new enhanced IDE – an update of the standard IDE hard disk interface. A discussion with some techie guys showed that while SCSI has some advantages over enhanced IDE, particularly for very big PCs, or where expansion is essential, for my system it was not really worthwhile. Enhanced IDE would provide the speed of SCSI, and the components would be much cheaper.

So both the hard disk and CD-Rom drive needed to be IDE. The 1Gb IDE hard drive was easy, as any modern unit will provide a noticeable speed improvement over a two-year-old model. I chose the cheapest and haven't regretted it.

The choice for the CD was a little more difficult, but in the end I opted for the new Pioneer ATAPI model. This is very fast, it's the latest model and hence highest tech, and better yet, it has a tray feed, not one of those fiddly caddies.

information highway

THAT left just one component – a modem. Having failed to enter into the spirit of the information superhighway I have not used one before, but I was keen to jump on the bandwaggon.

My choice here was dictated by the office environment – everyone has US Robotics 14,400 baud Sportster Fax/Modems. They are cheap and reliable, yet quite fast too..

The bill for this little lot proved to be something fearsome, but then I would finish up with a PC that had more drool power than any four sex symbols put together. Oh yes, I almost forgot, I also needed copies of Dos and Windows, since all my previous PCs had come ready loaded and I didn't have the original installation disks.

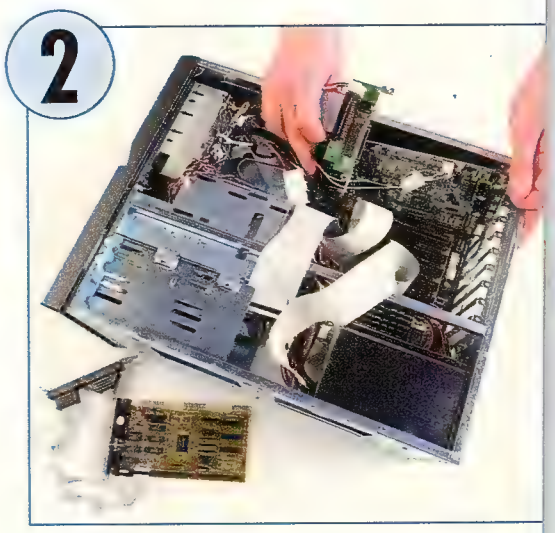
Once I had decided on the components it was time to think about which supplier to use. Whichever supplier you decide to use, if at all possible, use a credit

My old PC on the left and the upgrade kit on the right, still in the original packaging

Use a credit card for all your purchases, no matter how small the amount. If you do so you may get free insurance on the goods, a refund if the supplier goes bust and so on. Check with your credit card company

Step-by-step guide to success

The first task is to take the lid off the old PC and have a good look inside the case



Now carefully take out all the old expansion cards, such as the I/O and disk controller cards

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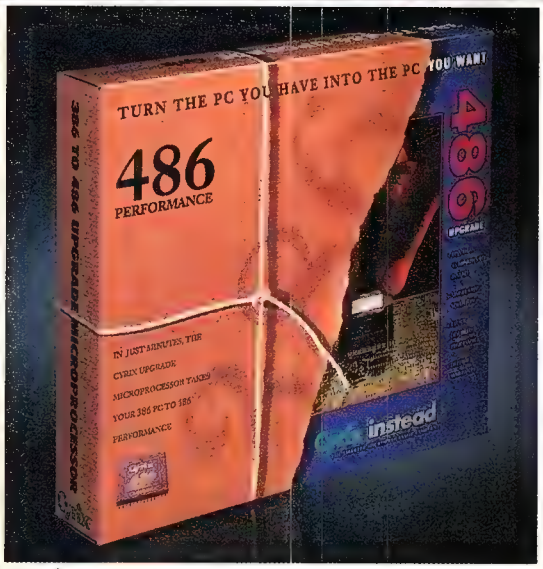

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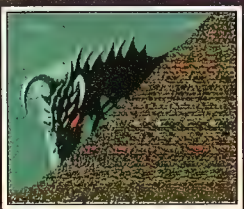

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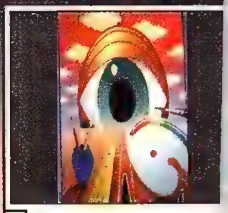

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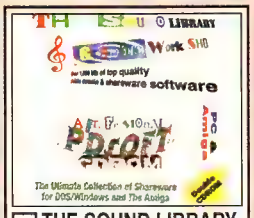

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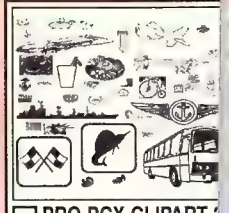

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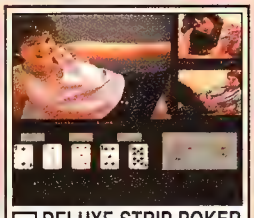

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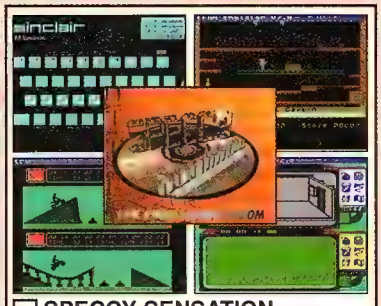

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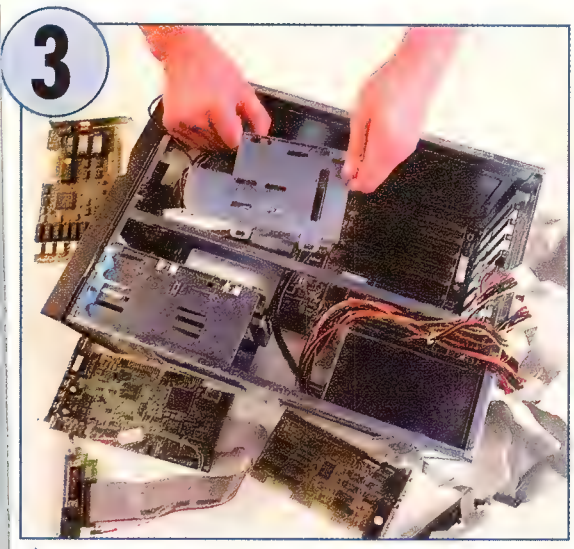
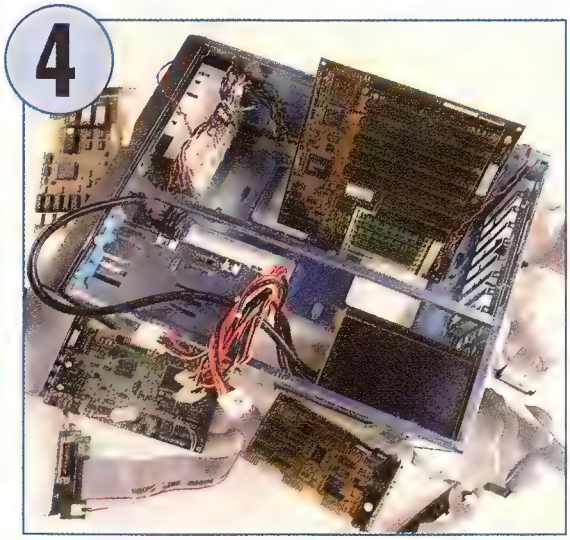


▲ *You may need to remove some of the metal casing, such as the drive bay shown here*



▲ *After unplugging all the cables, connectors and screws from the motherboard, slide it out*

card for every item, no matter how small the amount.

You shouldn't have any trouble at all with any of the items you buy, but if things go wrong (such as the supplier going bust after taking payment, but before delivering the goods) then there is a good chance that the credit card company will refund you. Some credit cards also provide insurance for the goods for a short period of time after purchase.

This really can not be emphasised enough. Horror stories are few and far between, but it is best not to leave everything to chance. If you do not have the required limit on your card call the credit company and ask for a temporary increase. They will usually be happy to oblige and you will not regret it. Or even ask a friend, but *pay by credit card.*

All good suppliers will have a technical support line – use it. Technical help is especially important when attempting an upgrade so make sure that you speak to them before placing your order. Tell them what equipment you have already got, and ask them if the parts you want are compatible with them – and each other.

measure competence

ASKING them questions is also a good way of measuring their competence, should you have a problem. Note how long you have to wait for somebody to answer your call.

One company I tried had a very good tech line, but I was queued for around 10 minutes before my call was answered, which is bad news with a long distance, peak rate call. After all, these are the people to whom you go for help when your shiny new part bombs the computer.

Finally, price is obviously important, but beware hidden extras. The omni-present VAT is not the only cost you might fail to consider. Delivery charges can make a surprising difference.

Also hidden in there are the help line costs. Better an operation that will not queue you, or pass you from pillar to post, than one that has a queue and no one knows where Bert the techie is.

Having decided on the parts, and then placed my orders, I sat back and waited with great expectation for them to arrive. In the meantime I went to work on the old PC with a screwdriver, snipe-nose pliers, earthing bracelet, pen and some sticky labels.

Using these I dismantled the innards completely, carefully marking the position and orientation of each lead and connector with sticky labels, just in case I needed to reassemble it. Better safe than sorry.

Over a period of a few days the

IRQ assignments

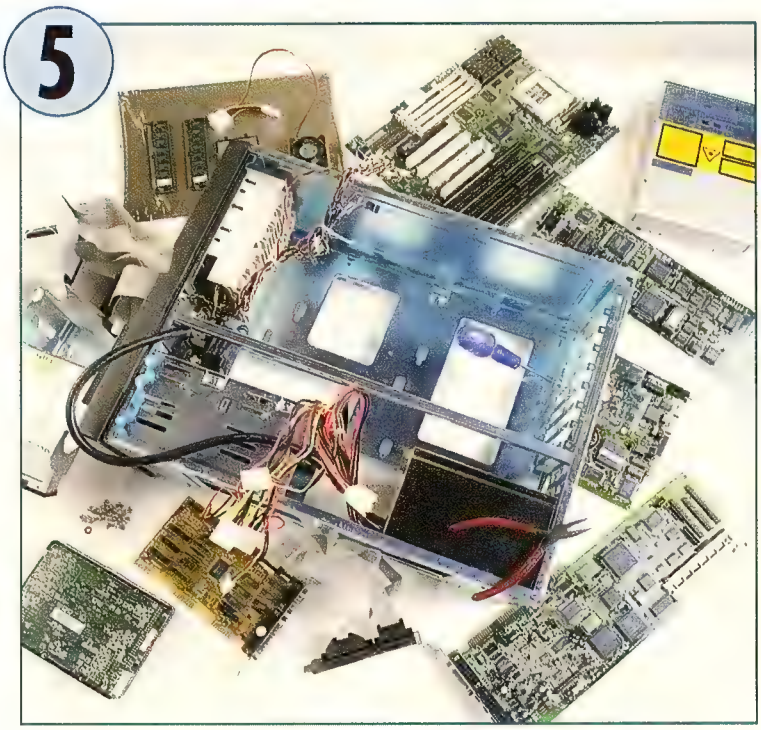
WHEN installing hardware such as internal modems, sound cards and the like, unless you have a 100 per cent plug and play system you'll need to set the interrupt request lines. Below is a table showing the IRQs used in a standard PC and what's available.

IRQ	Use
0	Timer
1	Keyboard
2	Slave
3	Serial port COM2/4
4	Serial port COM1/3
5	Free
6	Floppy drive controller
7	Printer port
8	Real-time clock
9	Redirected IRQ 2
10	Free
11	Free
12	Free
13	Maths coprocessor
14	Hard disk controller
15	Free

TOP TIP

Before touching anything inside your computer, earth yourself to remove any static electricity that may have built up – it can destroy the delicate components of a PC. Buy a special bracelet, or touch a metal radiator (not the painted bit!), or the case of the PC when it is plugged in *but switched off*

▲ *The US Robotics 14,400 Sportster modem is fast, cheap and combines fax and data transfer*



5

The empty shell of my old PC with all the new upgrade kits scattered around - will it all fit?

new parts gradually trickled in, with the motherboard being the last to arrive. This was very unfortunate because it immediately became obvious that this was my first cock-up! I had assumed, wrongly as it turned out, that it would fit into the case of the PC I was upgrading, or failing that, an old, huge and heavy desktop 286 I had abandoned ages ago. I was wrong on both counts.

The motherboard created two problems. Firstly, the PCI slots were partly blocked by the 3.5in drive bays on my old PC – I could use half length cards, but not full length ones. Secondly the CPU slot on the new motherboard was completely obscured by the drive bays in my old PC and partially eclipsed by the drive bays in the even older 286. The CPU and fan would fit in, but the airflow was very restricted, and the P90 chip has an exceptional heat output. Not good news.

So back went the motherboard and I had an alternative sent out. This had a better layout, but was still not ideal. The problem here was that the PCI slots were now partly blocked by the CPU slot. The first and last PCI would take a full length card, but the middle two would only take half length cards. Luckily I only needed one full length PCI slot, for the video card, so this would serve.

I happily set to, first earthing myself with a home-made bracelet and then unpacking the motherboard. A quick look through the manual showed that the only jumpers to be set were those for CPU speed and these were already set for a P90, so all I had to do was plug in the memory SIMMs, processor and fan. I did so and then placed the motherboard in the case.

After plugging in the power supply cables, and other sundries such as the reset leads, I came up against a slight problem. The case speaker had a four pin, orange/blank/blank/black plug. The motherboard asked for a four-pin, red/blank/black/5V plug. Having thought about it for some time I decided the orange was equivalent to the red, and that the only thing I might blow was the speaker, since black tends to be earth, and if the speaker got its power from somewhere else, who cared. Fingers crossed I hooked it up. It worked.

drive time

NEXT were the drives. With one hard disk and one ATAPI CD-Rom drive I plugged them into the primary on-board IDE socket, with the hard disk as the master and CD-Rom drive as a slave. In both cases the setting was via a jumper on the back of the drive – I knew those pliers would be useful for something.

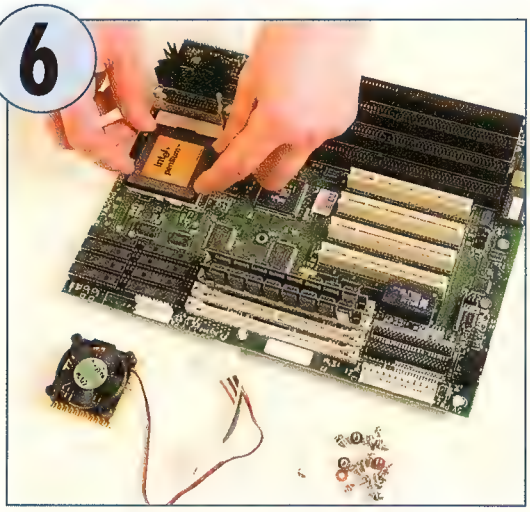
Problem number two, the data lead for the CD drive and hard drive was too short. After swapping the drives around in their bays I eventually settled for the CD at the top with the hard drive just underneath. This gave enough cable to connect the two. I then set the hard drive as far back as possible in the bay, which gave just barely enough cable to reach the IDE socket on the motherboard.

Reaching for the floppy disk drive I then realised there was nowhere to plug it in. Sure there was another hard disk IDE socket on the motherboard, but floppies are another kettle of fish. Whoops, cock-up number two.

I solved this one by using an old ISA/IDE disk controller, hoping that the card's IDE disk interface would not interfere with the motherboard's. Luckily it didn't – if you get an on-

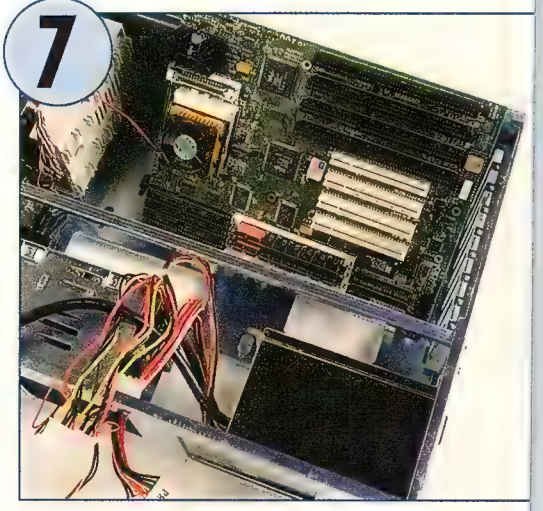
TOP TIP

Old IDE interfaces could accept only two hard disk drives, a master and a slave (set by changing a jumper on the drives). New enhanced IDE interfaces and components can handle up to four hard disk drives/CD-Rom drives – but still have a master/slave setup. Set the jumpers on the drives before you install them



6

It's easier to plug in the SIMMs, Pentium and fan before fitting the motherboard in the case



7

It is now time to carefully install the brand new motherboard into the old case

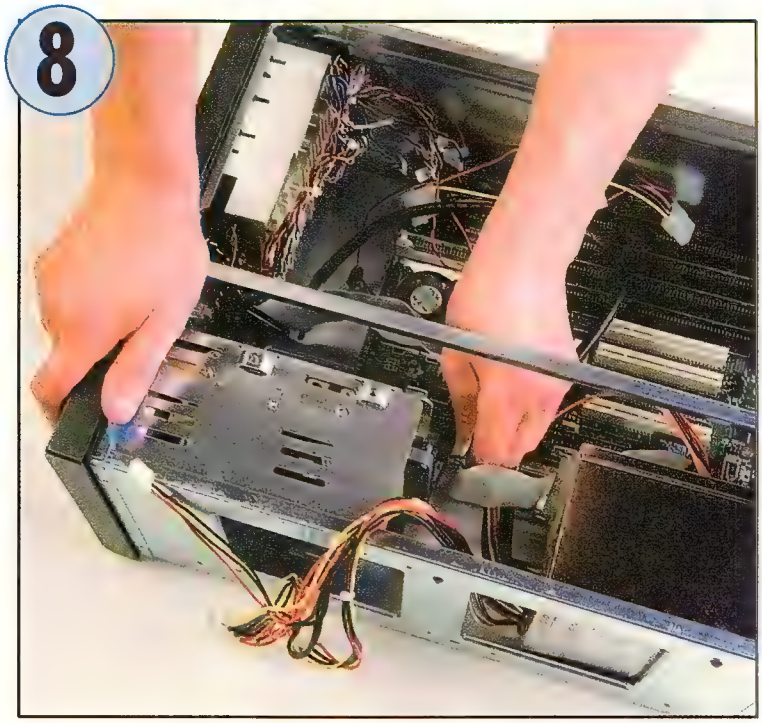
board IDE controller make sure it also has the floppy controller and I/O ports as well or you will still lose a slot for the relevant bits.

After fastening the floppy disk drive into the case it was time to add the other cards. Moving logically I started with slot one and worked up to the SIMM sockets. Slots one to four, all standard 16-bit ISA, took the full length AWE32 sound card, the half length Sportster modem, half length PS/2 mouse adapter and then the half length floppy drive controller.

On all but one of these the jumpers were OK, since the factory defaults were acceptable. The exception was the floppy controller, but since I had no manual for this I shrugged and hoped for the best.

Next the four PCI slots. Reaching for the Showtime video/MPEG card I realised I had a problem. It would not fit into the middle two PCI slots because the CPU and fan were in the way, and it would not fit into the fourth slot because the 3.5in drive bay was in the way.

The PCI Showtime is a weird card and is reversed (that is, the chips are on the wrong side of the circuit board), unlike the VESA version. Instead of blocking the port above the card with its bulk it uses the one below, which meant I had no choice but to lose an ISA card.



Fit the new hard drive into the empty drive bay and connect the power and data cables

card games

THERE was only one way to go and that was to lose the PS/2 mouse and substitute an old serial mouse instead. So I re-arranged the cards, AWE32, modem, floppy controller and then a blank slot, followed by the Showtime. Then I used an empty PCI slot for the I/O sockets bracket on the floppy controller.

Plugging in the relevant leads, I stood the case upright. It was now time to grasp the nettle firmly, switch on and hope that nothing went up in smoke. As luck would have it, nothing produced any smoke and I even got some beeps from the speaker. However, that was the full extent of events, because the monitor was dead. After a few minutes head-scratching I realised that the power lead wasn't plugged in firmly. Lo, and behold, up popped the display after I shoved the lead in. Phew!

Now I needed to change various CMOS settings so that my PC knew what was basically in it. I switched on again and pressed Delete to access the BIOS setup utility.

I set the date and time, set floppy A as 3.5in 1.44Mb and selected no floppy B, then set the primary hard drive using the auto-detect routine. I didn't bother with the chip-set, advanced or power management menus – in fact I have yet to set up the power management, but passed straight into the Dos boot-up.

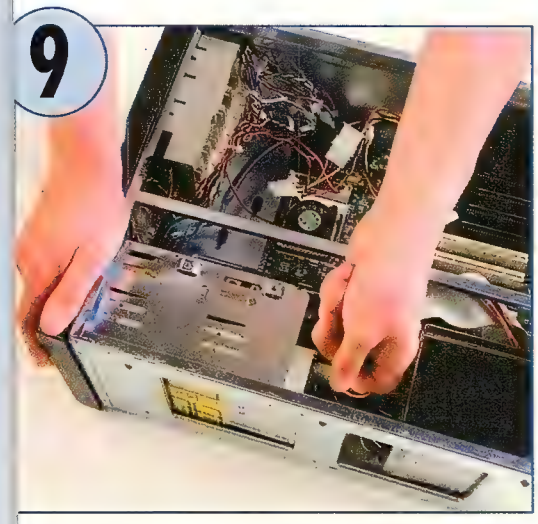
As expected the C drive, being totally unformatted, wasn't recognised by the system, but with malice aforethought I had made a bare 3.5in boot disk, so I inserted this and up came the system. Time to format the hard drive.

This is where I had the most problems. I am afraid I cannot remember the exact order of how things happened, mainly because I was getting rather frustrated. Suffice it to say that the BIOS refused to recognise the drive at all. I eventually got fed up and switched the new drive for my old drive – no problem there – but still could not get the BIOS to recognise my new drive.

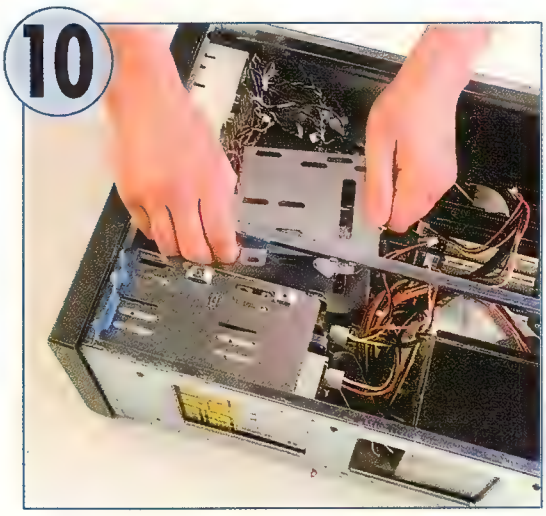
In the end I had tried resetting all the BIOS set-up, using the manual setup this time, removed the CD-

TOP TIP

Most PCs and motherboards are made to a standard design specification and are easy to upgrade. However, some compact designs aren't suitable because they have expansion slots on a vertical riser card, or the processor and memory are on plug in cards and so on. Ask if you can return the motherboard if it doesn't fit



The CD-Rom drive slots in next to the hard drive. Connect the power, data and audio cables



The metal drive bay I had to remove earlier can now go back. It'll hold the 3.5in floppy drive

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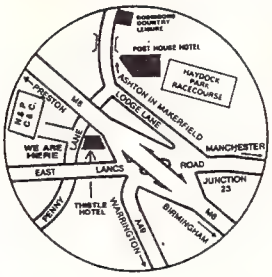

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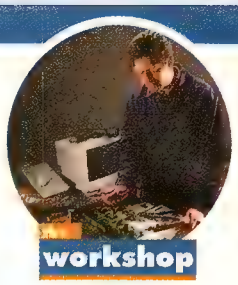

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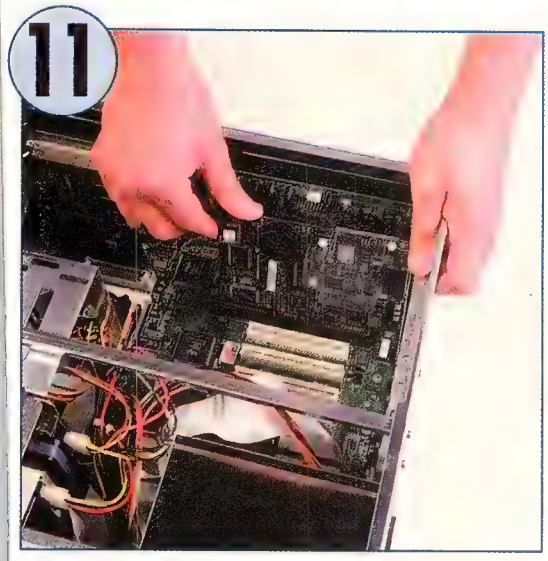
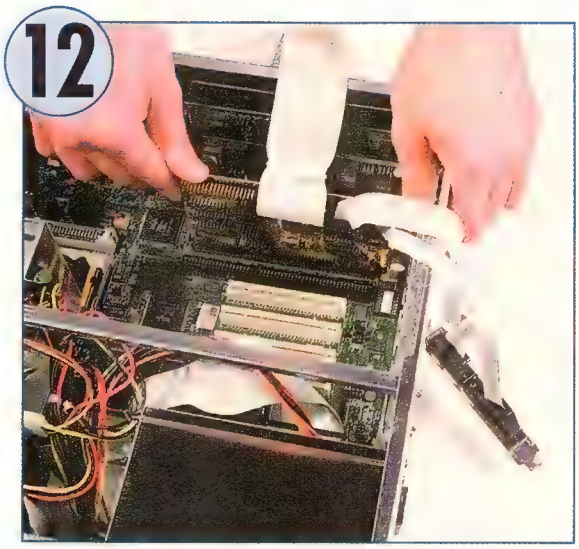


▲ *Plug the AWE 32 sound card and the internal modem into two of the expansion slots*



▲ *Finally, add the I/O card with the serial and parallel ports, and floppy disk controller*

Rom drive, messed with the slave/master jumper settings, and still had no luck. To this day I am not sure what the problem was, but I eventually solved it by removing the CD, removing the drive jumper so that it was set for neither master nor slave, and then re-setting the BIOS functions.

Incidentally, if you have just one drive on an IDE data connector the correct jumper setting is none, the drive is not set as master or slave, and neither is it set at the CSEL setting, whatever that is! This is where your supplier's technical support hotline comes in handy.

Anyway with the drive now being recognised I though I would be able to format it, but I couldn't. I quickly realised my problem this time though: You have to partition the hard drive before it can be formatted, and this means running a simple menu-driven utility called FDISK supplied with MS-DOS.

split disk

THE whole hard disk can be one big partition, or you can have lots of little ones – each one behaving like a separate hard disk drive. For partitioning I selected a 50Mb primary to hold my operating systems, wordprocessor and database.

The secondary partition I divided into a number of logical drives. These were 50Mb backup to hold an exact copy of the primary partition, 50Mb to hold all my work files, 100Mb to hold whatever temporary programs or games I happen to be working on, and a nice big 750Mb to lump whole CD contents into. Nice having a 1Gb drive, isn't it?

Since I had yet to re-connect the CD-Rom drive, I switched off, took out the hard drive and set the jumper to master, then added the CD with the jumper set to slave. This time the whole setup worked fine. Beats me what was wrong before.

Time to start adding the software. Step one was to install Dos. Using the MS-DOS 6.22 pack I installed it on C drive, following the instructions and everything was fine. Step two, Windows for Workgroups: Again I simply followed instructions, although I used the custom setup to give a minimum installation.

I now had a working computer, but without sound. So it was time to install the SoundBlaster AWE32 software. Once more I inserted the disk, selected drive A, entered INSTALL and followed instructions. I love all this automatic installation stuff, it makes things so much easier.

At this point I had a working computer, having taken just five hours to unpack the parts, read the manuals, assemble the components and install the software. I decided it was time for a break. So I loaded up Doom II and had a quick game. A few hours later I realised that this wasn't getting me anywhere and it was probably time for me to do some more work.

Video first. Once more it was time to insert the setup disk and follow instructions – everything went fine, Dos and Windows both.

A quick test of the MPEG video playback facility on the Spea Showtime card produced excellent video, but no sound. I had another look at the manual and just to be sure talked to a helpline tech.

The outcome was that the Showtime card only has one audio out – an external stereo jack – so for sound you either switch the speakers from the sound card to the video card or invest in a short external connecting cable to plug the sound output of the Showtime into the input of the sound card.

This left just one lot of software to install, that of the modem. Once

▲ *Everything is installed and ready to run. Those cables look like spaghetti though*

TOP TIP

If you get an on-board IDE controller make sure it also has the floppy controller and I/O ports as well or you will still lose a slot for the relevant interfaces

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Smash the SPEED barrier

words of wisdom

IF you are a little unsure about touching those new parts, after dismantling the PC put everything back together again. This will give you practice on putting parts back in, and out again.

Never force anything – all the components will fit with little effort if you have them correctly positioned. The only effort needed is when sliding expansion card connectors into slots, because the push fit can be tight.

All plugs for power leads are asymmetric – you cannot connect them incorrectly unless you use a lot of force. Most data leads, ribbon type, have a red or red striped wire on one edge. This is the pin 1 lead. Normally the plug on the lead has a little arrow indicating pin one on the plug. Just connect the pin 1 on the drive/card with pin one on the lead.

The A floppy, which is the boot floppy, must be connected to the plug on the data cable that has the twisted wires. Look at the cable and you will see what I mean.

The hardware side is really and honestly that easy. If you can wire a plug you can put a PC together. Compatibility of parts is something else. Check that motherboard.

The software side can be that easy, but then I tend to use Dos applications rather than Windows. Most applications will install just fine on most systems. Windows tends to give more installation problems than Dos, especially if you have a lot.

Your upgrade may differ slightly from mine, for example the CPU fan may need to be attached to the CPU and then the CPU placed into the slot.

more it was a case of running the install routine from the floppy and answering the questions as they came up.

A look at the memory using the MEM command showed that I was fast running out of conventional memory so I decided it was time to tweak the CONFIG.SYS and AUTOEXEC.BAT files to give more efficient installation. Simply running MS-DOS MemMaker in the Express mode gave me a total of 612k of available conventional memory. More than adequate.

To date this is the state of play, although I have been tweaking the Windows setup, and have dropped some programs, such as WordPerfect, from my old hard drive to the new one.

two problems

MY conclusions are pretty simple. Apart from a few minor glitches such as the mismatched speaker leads, wrong configuration motherboard, and having to fiddle with the CD-Rom drive and hard disk to get the latter working, only two problems are worth mentioning.

The first is the reverse layout of the Showtime card. While not world shattering, this has meant losing an ISA slot, and I need more ISA slots than PCI slots. If I had a larger case this would not have mattered so much, but as it is I was constrained to lose my preferred mouse.

Secondly the motherboard layout has a major effect on the success of the upgrade. Most boards seem to have one or more components badly placed, and it is just a matter of deciding which is best for you. My board, while functional, suffers from a number of problems that result in a less than perfect setup.

Firstly the CPU slot partially blocks two of the PCI slots so that you can't install long bulky cards. Secondly there is a large heatsink that blocks two of the ISA slots – again for long cards. Finally, something I have discovered over the last few days, the AMI BIOS chip is placed so that the middle two ISA cards push down on it. It works, but it's hardly ideal. So check that motherboard layout before buying.

Compared to buying an off-the-shelf PC this upgrade has been a success in terms of saving money. The internal layout is not ideal, but then few PCs have that good a layout. Yes, I had to install software, but this was really easy so long as you read the instructions.

Yes, I had to use MemMaker to configure memory, but have you seen some of the memory setups that bought PCs come with? And yes, I should have got an I/O/floppy card, but then a friend recently bought a PC, and his didn't have a mouse driver for Dos.

My upgrade turned into a mammoth operation, but any one of the components I used could be inserted into your PC without the rest, except for the Showtime, which needs either a VESA or PCI motherboard.

Also, although I had to replace most of the components I could have kept my old video card – a lovely little Tseng – and I need not have gone overboard on a P90, 16Mb ram and 1Gb hard drive. Just upgrade what you can afford.

sleepless nights

AS a penultimate word I would like to tell you about some of the downside of upgrading. As anyone in the *PC Home* offices can tell you, just changing a sound card can cause untold sleepless nights. And I know somebody who has done three upgrades and only one of them worked. It is not all sweetness and light. Obviously I was either lucky, skilful or you just have to show a little care.

Finally, would I do it again if I could choose once more? The answer is a resounding yes. Even if I wasn't writing this article I have learnt a lot about how a PC is put together, and I have not had any problems that could not be solved. The only changes I would make would be to the motherboard, to provide a better layout and easy slot use. ■

After adding extra memory or a hard or floppy disk drive you'll need to alter the CMOS ram settings. CMOS ram stores the configuration of your PC and there is usually a built in utility to enable you to change it. Press Delete or Escape when booting up

shopping list

MANY suppliers can provide the upgrade components you require. Here is a sample selection to give you an idea of how much you can expect to pay.

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Root out those files

In the second part of his tutorial on Visual Basic, Roland Waddilove shows how to scan your hard disk to reveal its secrets

ON this series of articles I'll be showing you how to write simple, but useful programs using Microsoft's Visual Basic. This is one of the easiest ways to write fully fledged Windows programs. With a bit of time, effort and patience, your DIY applications can look as good as their commercial counterparts, yet they cost nothing.

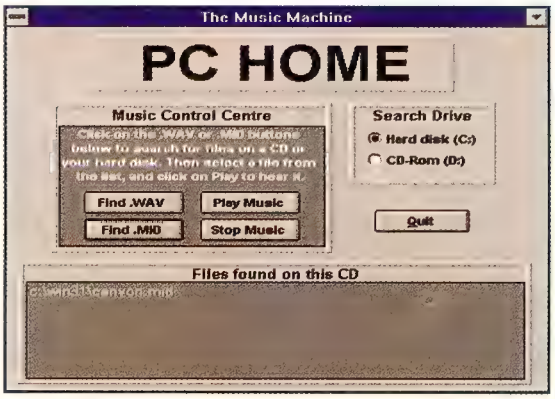
Last month I showed a handy utility which would scan your hard disk drive for any sound files in the form of samples (.WAV) and Midi music (.MID) and put their names into a list. Click on a file in the list, then on the Play button and the music would begin to play.

What's more, you could pop a CD into the CD-Rom drive and scan that as well. It's surprising what you find when browsing around commercial and shareware CDs, and it will track down files you never knew you had!

How does it work? I am going to show how to scan the hard disk drive for files and place them into a list. It's just one small part of the full application, but there are many tips and techniques to master before we can write the finished program.

A hard disk drive stores its files in what's called a hierarchical filing system, which is a bit like an upside down tree. There's the root at the top (C:\) then the subdirectories branching out from this. Each subdirectory can have other subdirectories branching out, and so on.

To locate all the sound files on a hard disk we need to start with the root directory (C:\) and look for .WAV and .MID files. Then we need to visit the subdirectories of the root and look for .WAV and .MID files. Then we need to look in the subdirectories of the subdirectories for .WAV and .MID files. And then...



▲ *This is the program we want to create. How does it work?*

As you can see, it is a very repetitive process travelling down the tree structure stopping at each subdirectory looking for files. Every branch must be taken and none must be missed in order to locate all the files. And there may be subdirectories of subdirectories of subdirectories – many levels deep – although few people nest directories more than about four our five deep.

How can we search such a tree structure for files? It is surprisingly simple and requires just a dozen or so lines of code. However, the concept involved – recursion – takes some brain power to get to grips with.

To demonstrate what recursion is all about and how to use it, I have written a short program called Factorial Calculator. I can't claim that it is a unique idea, it isn't. However, it's about as simple a recursion demo as you can get and is a classic example used to teach the concept. Here's how it works:

The factorial of a number is calculated by multiplying the number with all of the numbers up to and including it. so, the factorial of 3 (often written as 3!), for instance, is 1 x 2 x 3, and 5! is 1 x 2 x 3 x 4 x 5. One way of calculating the factorial

the factorial program

THIS program is on the cover disk and can be loaded into Visual Basic 3. It contains several techniques which are worth looking at, and the first is in the Form_Load procedure. These two lines centre the form on the screen:

```
Left = (Screen.Width - Width) \ 2
Top = (Screen.Height - Height) \ 2
```

Obviously, *Screen.Width* and *Screen.Height* are the width and height of the screen, whereas *Width* and *Height* refer to the form displayed. Subtract the width of the form from the width of the screen and you get the size of the border. Divide by two (\ is integer division, whereas / is floating point division), so that there are equal borders left and right of the form. Do the same for the height so that the form is centred.

To get the number out of the text box the program uses Val(Text1.Text) and puts the result into a variable called *number*. The factorial is then *factorial(number)*. The caption on Label1 can then be set to the result. Note that the program puts commas in the right place when the result is over 1,000. This is achieved with the Format$ function like this:

```
Label1.Caption="The factorial of"+Str$(number)+" is
"+Format$(f,"0,0")
```

The formatting string "0,0" in Format$(f,"0,0") tells Visual Basic to put the commas in.

FULL PROGRAM

of a number, *n*, is with the following For...Next loop:

```
n=5
f=1
For i = 1 To n
  f=f * i
Next
```

However, there is an alternative method, which isn't any shorter, but it does demonstrate recursion extremely well. Notice that 5! (1 x 2 x 3 x 4 x 5) is the same as 5 x 4! and 4! is the same as 4 x 3! and 3! is 3 x 2!. Using this knowledge we can write a function in two lines which works out the factorial of a number:

```
Function factorial (ByVal n As
Integer)
If n=1 Then factorial=1:Exit Function
factorial = n * factorial(n - 1)
End Function
```

You would call this function with a line like:

```
f = factorial(5)
```

At first sight, the function looks odd. The first line defines the function and tells Visual Basic that the variable *n* holding the number we want the factorial of is to be passed by value rather than reference. This means that the value 5 is passed to *factorial()*, rather than the address of a variable. Leaving out the ByVal can cause problems with recursion.

The second line – the first real line of code, checks whether the factorial we want is of the number 1. Obviously this is just 1 and so the function ends. The third line states that the factorial of the number *n* is equal to the factorial of *n* times (*n*-1), in the same way that we saw that 4! is 4 x 3!.

The function calls itself to calculate the factorial of *n*-1, which calls itself, and so on – recursing – until *n* is reduced to 1. When 1 is reached all those recursive function calls unwind and the value is calculated.

Study this example and work through it in your head or on paper until you are clear what is happening. It is a bit mind boggling at first, but it's an important programming concept.

I have digressed slightly, so what has all this got to do with our Music Machine program?

The method of scanning the hard disk for files uses a very similar technique of recursion. In the same way that *factorial()* repeatedly called itself to drill down to eventually get to 1, the file finder drills down through subdirectory and subdirectories of subdirectories collecting files until it can't drill down any further.

In other words, it traverses each branch of the directory tree looking for files until it reaches the end of each branch.

To show how this works I have written a small program which has just two controls – a list box and a Go button. Click on Go and it will scan your hard disk drive for .WAV files and place them in the listbox as it finds them. You can load the program from the cover disk and try it. Let's see how it works.

There is more to this program than meets the eye as there are three hidden controls: The drive control, directory list box and file list box. If you want to create this form from scratch – it's good practice – put these three controls on a blank form and set their Visible property to False. You'll be able to see them in Edit mode, but not when the program is running. Add the list box and a Go button – these should be visible.

Here is the recursive subroutine which does all the hard work of collecting filenames and directories:

```
Sub GetFileList (ByVal p$)
Dim t$, i As Integer
t$="\"
If Right$(p$,1)="\" Then t$=""
Dir1.Path = p$
File1.Path = Dir1.Path
If File1.ListCount > 0 Then
   For i = 0 To File1.ListCount - 1
      List1.AddItem p$+t$+File1.List(i)
   Next
End If
If Dir1.ListCount > 0 Then
   For i = 0 To Dir1.ListCount - 1
      t$ = Dir1.List(i)
      GetFileList (t$)
      Dir1.Path = p$
   Next
End If
End Sub
```

This function is called from the Go button with the following lines of code:

```
File1.Pattern = "*.wav"
GetFileList "c:\"
```

which tells the subroutine which files to look for (*.wav) and where to start searching from (c:\). You could tell it to look on the CD-Rom drive very easily by changing the *c* to *d* and it will then scan any CD you place in the drive for Windows .WAV files.

The first task of *GetFileList* is to make sure there is a backslash (\) on the end of the filename parameter *p$*. The directory list box has a Path property which tells the control which subdirectory to open. Dir1.Path is set to *p$* – the current path. The file list box, File1, is set to the same directory and so will display all the files in the path *p$* (that match the pattern we set earlier *.wav).

The number of files found is held in the ListCount property of File1 and we only need to collect the filenames if this is greater than zero. The For...Next loop collects all the filenames in the list box and adds them to the current path to get the full path.

Then we need to check for subdirectories using the ListCount property of the directory control Dir1. If it's greater than zero there must be one or more subdirectories, so using a For...Next loop *GetFileList* is called with each directory name.

That's all there is to it. It's a bit mind boggling the first time you read through it, but it's worth studying. Try changing the drive selected and the pattern to D: and *.MID to look for Midi files on a CD. If you have a big hard disk or CD with lots of files on, say over 1,000 sound files, the program might run out of memory. You might like to put an If...Then statement in to stop adding items to the listbox if there are too many.

● *That's all for this month. In the next instalment we'll be able to finish off our Music Machine utility.* ■

Try putting in an If...Then statement to stop adding items to the listbox if there are too many

what-a-lotto-fun

HEARING about the chap who won £22 million on the lottery has spurred me on to develop the program I started in last month's article.

Although statistically every combination is just as likely as any other, the funny thing about the lottery is that there has never been a draw result with all odd numbers or all even ones. We can therefore eliminate these unlikely possibilities from the 14 million combinations. What's left should be good quality lottery draw entries.

From the cover disc, load LOTTERY.MAK into Visual Basic and look at the code on the Go button to see what I've done. There's a function called *OddEven()* which counts the number of odd and even numbers in each line. If there are too many then a False return value prevents the line from being written to disk.

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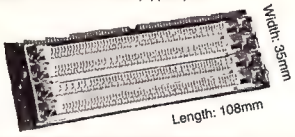

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Hobbykit	2814FM	£200	●
Hobbykit	2814 FME	£230	●
Ladbroke	GVC 14,400	£109	●
Ladbroke	Trust 14,400	£99	●
Ladbroke	Trust 14,400 E	£109	●
Ladbroke	Alto 28,800	£199	
Multi-Tech	MT1932 ZDX	£233	●
Multi-Tech	MT1432 MK	£527	●
Multi-Tech	MT1432 LTI	£351	●
Multi-Tech	MT2834 LTI	£468	●

modems

If you're itching to get into comms but don't know where to turn for buying advice, our guide to the modem market will prove an excellent starting point.

Speed (bps)	Int/Ext	Fax	Warranty	Telephone
14,400	Ext	●	3 years	01734 810600
14,400	Int	●	5 years	01734 810600
28,800	Ext	●	3 years	01734 810600
28,800	Int	●	3 years	01734 810600
14,400	Ext	●	3 years	01734 810600
14,400	Int	●	3 years	01734 810600
28,800	Ext	●	3 years	01734 810600
28,800	Int	●	3 years	01734 810600
14,400	Int	●	3 years	01734 810600
14,400	Ext	●	3 years	01734 810600
14,400	Int	●	3 years	01734 810600
28,800	Int	●	5 years	0113 2319444
28,800	Ext	●	5 years	0113 2319444
14,400	Ext	●	2 years RTB	01252 775500
28,800	Ext	●	2 years RTB	01252 775500
14,400	Ext	●	2 years RTB	01252 775500
28,800	Ext	●	2 years RTB	01252 775500
2,400	Ext		n/a	0181-205 7485
2,400	Int	●	1 year	0181-205 7485
14,400	Int	●	5 year limited	0181-205 7485
14,400	Int	●	5 year limited	0181-205 7485
14,400	Int	●	5 year limited	0181-205 7485
14,400	Ext	●	5 year limited	0181-205 7485
28,800	Int	●	5 year limited	0181-205 7485
28,800	Int	●	5 year limited	0181-205 7485
28,800	Ext	●	5 year limited	0181-205 7485
14,400	Ext	●	1 year	01772 203166
14,400	Int	●	5 years	01772 203166
14,400	Ext	●	5 years	01772 203166
28,800	Ext	●	Life time	01772 203166
14,400	Ext	●	10 years	01344 891266
14,400	Ext	●	5 years	01344 891266
14,400	Int	●	5 years	01344 891266
28,800	Int	●	5 years	01344 891266

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2.1GB SCSI.....£649.00
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1GB E-IDE.....£223.00
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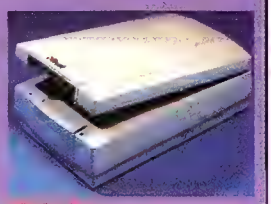

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buyers' guide to modems

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Multi-Tech	MT1432 BLK	£586	●
Multi-Tech	MT2834 BLK	£703	●
Multi-Tech	MT2834 ZDXK	£351	●
Solwise	1414A	£64	
Solwise	1428A	£158	
Solwise	1428E	£175	
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Solwise	1414E	£82	
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Solwise	V9624A	£34	
Solwise	V9624E	£76	
Solwise	1414P	£123	
Solwise	1414C	£158	
Solwise	9624T	£34	
Solwise	9624P	£52	
Solwise	1428P	£186	
US Robotics	Sportster 14.400 Fax	£233	●
US Robotics	Sportster 28.800 Mac & Fax	£351	●
US Robotics	Sportster 28,800 Fax	£351	●
US Robotics	Worldport Dual Standard Cellular PCMCIA	£351	●
US Robotics	Courier Dual Standard V.34 Fax	£468	●
US Robotics	Worldport Dual Standard V.34 PCMCIA	£468	●
US Robotics	Sportster 14,400 Mac & Fax	£233	●
US Robotics	Sportster 14,400 PC Bus Int	£233	●

Speed (bps)	Int/Ext	Fax	Warranty	Telephone
9,600	Ext	●	5 years	01344 891266
14,400	Ext	●	5 years	01344 891266
28,800	Ext	●	5 years	01344 891266
28,800	Ext	●	10 years	01344 891266
14,400	Int	●	30 day money back, 1 year RTB	01482 473899
28,800	Int	●	30 day money back,1 year RTB	01482 473899
28,800	Ext	●	30 day money back, 1 year RTB	01482 473899
14,400	Int	●	30 day money back,1 year RTB	01482 473899
14,400	Ext	●	30 day money back,1 year RTB	01482 473899
2,400	Int	●	30 day money back,1 year RTB	01482 473899
2,400	Int	●	30 day money back,1 year RTB	01482 473899
2,400	Ext	●	30 day money back,1 year RTB	01482 473899
14,400	Ext	●	30 day money back,1 year RTB	01482 473899
14,400	Int	●	30 day money back,1 year RTB	01482 473899
2,400	Int	●	30 day money back,1 year RTB	01482 473899
2,400	Ext	●	30 day money back,1 year RTB	01482 473899
28,800	Ext	●	30 day money back,1 year RTB	01482 473899
14,400	Ext	●	5 years	01734 228200
28,800	Ext	●	5 years	01734 228200
28,800	Ext	●	5 years	01734 228200
28,800	PCMCIA	●	5 years	01734 228200
28,800	Ext	●	5 years	01734 228200
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I learned to...

Chris Jones discovers the finer art of tinkling the ivories with his PC

HELP

For more information on music software contact specialist suppliers EtCetera on 01706 228039

WHEN I was a kid I learnt how to play the violin. I hated it, not because I hated music, but because my teacher was a vixen from hell and she turned me right off music for nearly two decades.

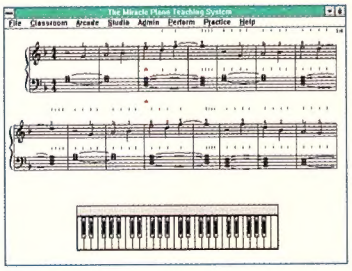
With my mid life crisis heading for me like a locomotive, I decided I should better my outlook and confront my demons and learn to play the piano.

My first problem was that I live in a small flat and certainly have no space (or dosh) for a real piano. A Midi keyboard seemed a very good alternative: Small, light and relatively cheap. I also knew that if I plugged a keyboard into my PC, it would turn it into an all-singing, all-dancing music workstation, that is, if I could ever play a note.

The inherent advantages of learning a musical instrument on a PC were obvious – I could use the keyboard to play any instrument my sound card would support – piano, trumpet, choir even bongo drums.

I could use a sequencer to build up my own musical tracks. Who knows, I could even turn into one of those successful bedroom dance musician types who storms to the top of the charts with something they hammered together after school – well, maybe not. I could, well could do a lot, that is if I actually got round to learning how to read music and a play the piano.

I opted for a small arbiter keyboard and the Miracle Piano tutoring system. Once I was up and running, the first thing I noticed was how good it all sounded – just like a piano – maybe I was still stuck in early '80s Casio hell. The illusion was helped because the keyboard had dynamic attack – that is, the harder I pushed the key, the louder the note – very organic indeed.



▲ *Make music with Mindscape's Miracle Piano Tutor*

Even now I was doing my best to avoid getting round to lessons. The Miracle Piano tutor adopts rigid, set ones that must be completed before moving on. I found this system both successful and rewarding.

Within an hour I was playing Beethovens 9th with a whole orchestra backing me up. True I was only playing with one hand, but it felt and sounded very impressive. With lesson one completed, Miracle Piano presented me with a certificate of achievement. I was very proud.

That's when it started to get tough. I couldn't fault the Miracle Piano software – it allowed me to practise at my own pace and made learning fun and rewarding. However, that didn't dilute the fact that learning a musical instrument is fantastically hard. I am used to having something cracked in a few hours – it was obvious that this was going to take a few years! I didn't know if I had that much patience.

For parents with kids learning instruments at school, this kind of setup is ideal. It's effective and inexpensive with a tutor who won't bark at the pupil, and who is available 24 hours a day.

More importantly, the system allows those who excel to move quicker and achieve dizzying heights, limited only by their own skill and enthusiasm. Miracle Piano tutor is only the beginning, as the keyboard will interface with any software that supports Midi.

A simple sequencer would allow budding Beethovens to write their own symphonies, or more likely, their own Take That songs. The idea of using a computer to help create music could seem a little unethical.

immense flexibility

HOWEVER, I felt that it was a logical marriage of technology and culture working at its best.

Playing a keyboard on a computer based system is in no way easier than the real ivories and ebonies, but it does afford an immense degree of flexibility that you could never get out of the world's best Steinway – guess a Steinway would sound better though!

While I now use both hands to hobble through my lessons, I am making slow progress. I have to admit that it's an uphill struggle. ■

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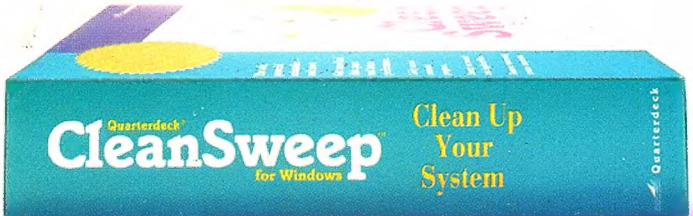

Since uninstalling the wrong file – say, a shared DLL – can disable other programs, CleanSweep uses SuperLinks to track files that are needed by multiple applications.

It also lets you view any file, confirm every action, undo anything you've done and even perform trial runs to see how much disk space you're about to gain.

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To really get the most out of CleanSweep, you'll want to use it to track down and delete all kinds of duplicate, backup, archive, help and bitmap files.

Not to mention system components such as unneeded graphics drivers, forgotten fonts, unsightly wallpaper, old system files and unused screen savers.

But before you can even think about doing any of this, you'll need to see your nearest reseller – and ask for CleanSweep.

Or call Quarterdeck on 01245-496699.

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